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# COMMENTARIES

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OCCASIONS OF ORDINATION.

BY WILLIAM WHITE, D. D.

BISHOP OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE COMMON-  
WEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA.

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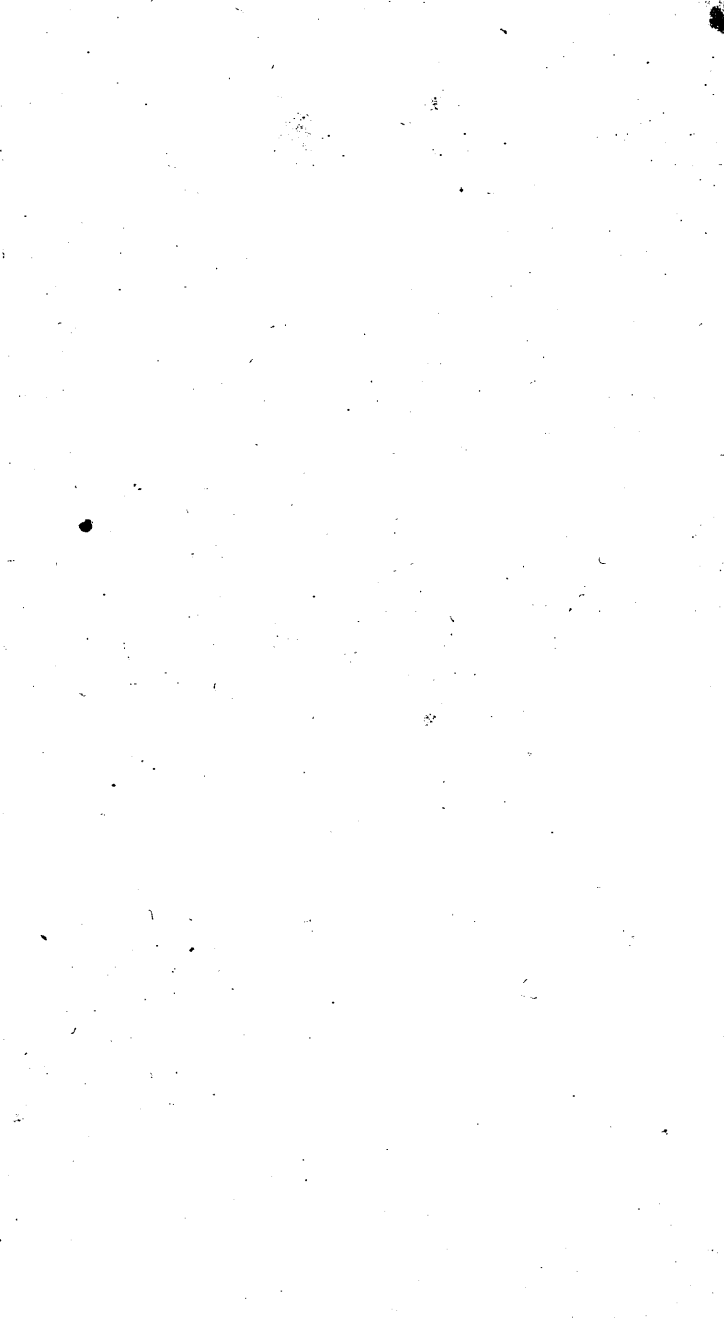
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# DEDICATION.

TO

THE BISHOPS

OF THE

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE  
UNITED STATES.

RIGHT REV. BRETHREN,

THE following publication being issued on your recommendation, I cannot but hope, that there will be the resulting influence of your names.

In my preparation, and in my delivery of these commentaries, I have never anticipated their being of use, beyond the limits of the Diocese for which they were composed. No other idea occurred, until it was suggested by the Right Rev. Bishop Bowen, whose judgment and whose desire could not but have great weight



with me ; especially when repeated, at the late meeting of the House of Bishops in General Convention. It was at his instance, that you gave to the present edition your unanimous sanction ; which is duly appreciated, Right Rev. Brethren, by

Your friend and brother,

WM. WHITE.

*Philadelphia, May, 1833.*

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**COMMENTARY**

**ON THE**

**QUESTIONS IN THE OFFICE**

**FOR THE**

**ORDAINING OF DEACONS.**

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## PREFATORY ADDRESS.

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BROTHER [OR BRETHREN,]

WHEN I entered on the work of ordaining to the ministry, it was not without a sense of the responsibility referred to in the saying of the Apostle St. Paul —“Lay hands suddenly on no man.” Notwithstanding the induced caution, there arose temptations to laxity, from pressing exigencies of our destitute congregations over the whole of the United States, our ministry having become almost annihilated, during the war of the Revolution.

After a while, there opened on me two sources of sorrow from the ordinations which had taken place. On the one hand, there had been admitted to the ministry some men, whose succeeding conduct proclaimed them to be strangers to the influence of the truths, to the teaching of which they had pretended to devote their time and their talents. Although

this was the result of false professions, and in many instances of deceitful recommendations; and although it had been an object in the preceding intercourse, and especially in the examinations, to imitate the views which should govern in the contemplated undertaking; yet, the thought at last occurred, that the doing of this, in discourses framed for the purpose of guarding against an unwary taking, on the tongue, of promises not harmonizing with inward cast of character, might, in some instances, cause a reconsideration of the subject, and thus restrain from great sin.

The other cause of regret, was, in some ministers, deviations from the clear senses of those answers in the services, which give the pledge of adherence to our liturgy; and of submission to an authority recognized by our system of ecclesiastical government, and by the canons. It is impossible, that this conduct can be vindicated by any professions of piety, supposing them to be sincere; but I must declare the opinion, that it has been chiefly owing either to vanity, or, under the most favourable circumstances, of views of the dispensation of grace, differing from those sustained in the Church of England, and in this Church. The most favourable interpretation to be put on such cases, is that the parties, perhaps insensibly to themselves, have no preference of our ministry, otherwise than as it is a door to our Churches, not otherwise to be entered.

The candidate [or candidates] is [or are] possessed of the motives, to the commentary now presented. For some few years after its being prepared, it was read during the examination: but subsequent reflection suggested, that if read in retirement, with meditation and prayer, the intended effect would be thus the most likely to be accomplished. With this view, it was printed in a periodical Magazine, as were also the two other commentaries in this book; and some copies were struck off, to be given to succeeding candidates. The copies are reduced to two: which imposes on me the necessity of delivering, to each candidate, a copy to be read and to be returned by him.

WM. WHITE.



## ORDINATION OF DEACONS.

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**QUESTION I.** "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon you this office and ministration, to serve God for the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his people?"

In proportion to the solemnity of this appeal to the conscience, there should be care, on the one hand, not to adopt any expedient for the lessening of the responsibility designed to be brought on the candidate; and on the other hand, not to suppose that there is exacted a species of call of which not a single instance appears on record in the New Testament. Accordingly there may be a propriety in delaying the attention for a while, on the force of the expression, "I trust." It is not uncommon to hear this question appealed to, in order to prove that the Church requires an absolute assurance of a divine call to the ministerial office. Were there indeed an inward call, alike clear with that outward call which St. Paul heard on his journey to Damascus; it would become the person receiving it, in imitation of the same apostle, who "conferred not with flesh and



blood," to enter on his office without the consent of man. But the whole scheme of the Christian ministry, as framed by the apostles, and handed down to us in succession, implies the intervention of an ecclesiastical order, designated for the purpose. Accordingly, as the question of the candidate's fitness for the office, is not subjected altogether to the test of a consciousness in his own mind; so in reference to what passes there, as duly pointed to its object, he is expected to declare, not his assurance, but his trust. And indeed, the Church by making this the ground of her proceeding, rejects the other; which, if there were any warrant for it, ought to have been noticed and demanded.

Very important, however, is the appeal made, under the expression which the service uses; and very awful is the responsibility involved in the reference to the Holy Spirit. It will be no difficult matter to ascertain what the Church means, when she warrants the ascribing of any religious disposition of the mind to so high an agency. The Scriptures assure us, Eph. v. 9. "that the fruits of the Spirit are in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." In Gal. v. 22, the fruits of the Spirit are described more at large. And the passages are many, in which there is attributed to the Spirit of grace whatever is holy and good in man. Our Church, keeping in view this evangelical truth, recognises it continually in her service. If then, agreeably to the expressions which follow in the question of serving God for the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his people, a man be desirous of taking on him the ministerial office, under a sufficient knowledge of the purposes for which it

was instituted, accompanied by a due regard to them ; and if he be desirous of devoting his time, his talents, and his labours, to so holy and benevolent a use ; surely it is not less to be ascribed to the Holy Spirit, than any good work which he can perform.\*

But, to place this matter in a more practical point of view, let it be inquired, what are the grounds on which, after an investigation of the evidences of being moved by the Holy Ghost, in the sense which has been unfolded, there may be either assurance of the negative, or a modest trust in the affirmative.

If the motive be either wealth or maintenance, it is corrupt ; coming under the censure which St. Peter passes on those who undertake the ministry "for filthy lucre's sake." If it be the effect of ambition, and for the display of any talent which may be possessed, it is indeed not so sordid as the other, but not in the least more holy.

There is no need to enumerate the improper passions which may actuate the heart of man : of all which we may pronounce, that the motive cannot be correct, if there be any trait of character which, if known, would throw dishonour on the calling. On the scriptural principle of there being "no communion of light with darkness," the Holy Spirit cannot dwell under such an alienation from the genius of the

\* On the supposition of there being required a special revelation of the call to the mind of the candidate, it is incongruous in this service, that when the bishop, after the imposition of hands, delivers the Gospel to the candidate, and gives authority to read and to preach it in the Church of God, the preaching is with the restriction—"if thou be thereto admitted by the Bishop himself." On the said-supposition, this is an arrogant limitation of the divine commission.

It is equally incongruous in the candidate, to submit to the test of a literary examination.

Christian ministry ; and therefore, under the disqualification of such a circumstance, cannot move to it.

Further ; if there be not, in addition to this absence of every foul stain, a bent of mind that disposes to devotion ; that takes delight in the truths, and in the consolations of religion ; that rejoices in whatever extends her influence, and grieves at any thing by which she is dishonoured ; it is impossible that a person to whom this is wanting can be moved by the Holy Ghost, to interest himself in her concerns, or to administer in her offices.

But if a man desirous of the ministry, should believe on an honest inquiry into his heart, that in sincerity, although doubtless mixed with imperfection, he is desirous of discharging his duty to God and man ; if he should be not sensible of any known sin, that cuts him off from the benefits of the Christian covenant, and ought therefore to bar him from the Christian ministry ; if he do not feel himself prompted, either by the love of gain or by the love of honour ; although under the former head we may lawfully look, with moderation, to the supply of the wants of himself and of his family ; and, under the latter, he may enjoy any reputation which may be brought to him by his talents, giving the glory to God, and not bearing himself with arrogancy to men ; and finally, if he should be sensible of a direction of mind interesting him in whatever extends the kingdom of grace, and fits men for the better kingdom of glory ; such an inward character, satisfactorily perceived by those to whom the Church has committed the right of judging of the sufficiency for the undertaking generally, may be counted on as evidence of

that moving by the Holy Ghost, which the service holds out as so important.

Under this head, there remains something which seems worthy of consideration. When Christianity was first planted, the apostles ordained the most suitable persons from among their early converts, without a preparatory education, under an especial designation to the service, which, in the circumstances then existing, must be evidently seen to have been impossible. In all succeeding ages throughout the Christian Church in general, the ministerial offices have been filled by persons designed for them, from early periods of their lives. How far this is consistent with the sanctity of the profession, is the inquiry which is now proposed.

For a father to destine his son to the ministry, for some secular object to be accomplished, and the project to be carried into effect without any reference to qualifications, and especially the essential qualifications of love and zeal for the work, and desire of being useful in it, is to bring on them both a heavy load of sin. But if a parent, being himself devout, should give his son an education qualifying for the ministry, so far as education can qualify for such a purpose; if the parent should wish that the effect may be his son's future usefulness in the Church; and if, all along, the inclinations and the fitness of the latter are circumstances without which the former neither endeavours nor desires to carry his plan into effect; he is so far from deserving censure, that his conduct may be pronounced the effect of holy thought and purpose; and, whatever may be the issue, he has deserved well of the Church, by his zeal and by his endeavours in her service.

Nothing remains under this first head, but to express the wish, in regard to every candidate, that his preparation may be such as to stand the test here laid down. Were it possible to read his heart, and there were discerned in it a manifest falling short of the sense of the question which is to be proposed and answered; he should here be cautioned, as he tends the honour of God, the good of the Church, the salvation of his soul, and not these only, but even his comfort in the present life, not to take on himself an office, which will cover him with crime; which has peculiar trials, bringing with them corresponding consolations to others, yet not to him; and above all, which will subject him to a responsibility hereafter, before the Judge of quick and dead.\*

**QUESTION II.** "Do you think that you are truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and according to the canons of this Church, to the ministry of the same?"

There is here a change of language from "do

\* Against examining into the movements of the mind of the candidates, farther than is provided for in the services, there are the following objections:

No authority for it can be shown from the Scriptures; while the contrary to it may be shown, from the absence of it in 1 Tim. iii. 1—13, and in Tit. i. 6—9.

It affords temptations to prevarication and deceit.

It may be a door to tyranny of the Bishop, or of those concerned with him in admission to holy orders; who may put a veto on a candidate, because of his want of something not defined, but held by them to be essential.

In England, during the prostration of her Church, it was productive of tyranny and of hypocrisy, in the hands of tryers, as they were called.

These considerations ought not to prevent addresses to the consciences of the candidates; which are an object of the present commentaries.

you trust" to "do you think." In the preceding question, the matter asked after, related entirely to a certain consciousness in the mind; but here the inquiry has partly a reference to external institution. And therefore the question is so framed as to admit of a greater degree of diffidence in the answer.

What confirms the distinction here taken, is the phraseology made use of in the Latin service; for this being of equal authority with the English, in the Church of England, they are mutually interpretative of one another. The expressions used by the Latin service in the first question is, "Num persuasum habetis;" and that in the second question is, "Num in ea estis sententia:" in which two forms the difference seems more pointed than in the English.

There is a reason for this difference in the two questions. Although the mind should be made up under the effect of due care, and although a man has to answer for the influence of vicious prejudice over his judgment, yet the Church considers, that opinion should be delivered as such, and not as knowledge.

There are two branches of the opinion to be given: that the call is agreeable to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ; and concurrently with this, to the canons of the Church.

To justify the candidate in believing that he is called according to the will of Christ, he should be convinced, after due inquiry, that the Church to which he looks for ordination, is a true apostolick Church, deriving its authority from that founded by the apostles. For since they did confessedly found a communion, and since it did confessedly transmit its ministries, there seems no possible right to the

name of a Christian Church at present, but in succession from the originally established body. What then is the result, but that an opinion, formed under due care, is a prerequisite of admission to the ministry?

It is of importance to every candidate, and much more so to the Church, that he should have his principles settled on the present point; since otherwise he will be in continual danger of setting up his own opinion in contrariety to what the Church has decided or ordained. Why not, he will be apt to say, in matters resting on the will of man? Even in this he reasons wrong, since individual right may be limited by compact. But if human will be exercised under an authority delegated by heaven; and if it require nothing absolutely sinful, (for in the latter case the reasoning does not apply,) it is surely a heavy aggravation of individual caprice, that it is the resistance of an authority so high; an authority which the exigencies of the Church make necessary; which must be exercised by fallible men; but which had best not be exercised at all, if every man carries in his own breast the measure of the submission which should be paid to it.

The other particular is the canons of the Church. Although as a branch of the general Church, she has essentially the power of self-government, yet this should be conducted by known laws, which, when made, ought to be respected and obeyed. In this place the canons are considered more immediately as applying to admission to the ministry. In regard to which, it is proper to remark, that if a minister should be obtruded on the Church, in violation of the canons, it must be in consequence

either of some imposition on his part, or of neglect in his ordainer. The question then, by the appeal which it makes to the conscience of the candidate, may prove a counterpoise, not only to excessive facility in the bishop, but also to the shameful looseness of principle often found in social life, inducing men of plausible character in other respects, to put their names to testimonials, exhibiting for facts what is beyond, and even what is in contrariety to the knowledge of the subscribers. If a candidate should know, that there is in his case an attempt to evade, in this or in any other way, the design of the canons of the Church, it concerns him to be aware, that the contrary was intended to be provided for in the question which he is to answer in his ordination.

But there is another evil, which was intended to be guarded against. It is that of a man's entering the Church, not contemplating the being subject to the canons, and conducting his subsequent ministry in defiance of them, and of the authority by which they were ordained. Surely such a man cannot think himself called agreeably to the canons of the Church. It is possible, however, that he may console himself with the thought that he is called agreeably to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ. But this cannot be when the object is accomplished by imposition. Were the two matters at variance, the divine call would dictate to him to disregard the other. It is to be feared, that if the conduct here noticed could be traced to the spring of it in the human heart, it would be found to originate in the failing, which induces men for the accomplishment of an object supposed good, to make great sacrifices of conscience: the object in the present case being



the procuring of admission to opportunities, from which they would otherwise be excluded.

Any candidate before whom this may come, would do well to consider it as a caution against the making so light of the sacred law of truth. He may, perhaps, conceive that his general object is good. Let him remember, that he may misjudge in this, from the imperfection of the human understanding : but there can be no mistake in affirming the unlawfulness of doing evil that good may come.

**QUESTION III.** "Do you unfeignedly believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament ?"

This requisition has two points in view ; the genuineness of the sacred books, and the evidences on which there should be faith in their contents.

For the unfolding of the first, it should be noticed, as to what is understood by the canonical books of Scripture, that it appears from the enumeration of them in the book of the Thirty-Nine Articles ; and as to what is presumed to demonstrate the authenticity of the books, that it may be seen in the part of the twentieth Article, which denominates the Church, "the Witness, and the Keeper of Holy Writ." It will therefore be perceived, that their genuineness rests on the testimony of the Church : and the stating of this must be understood to the exclusion of other standards of authenticity, imagined by different descriptions of persons. The Church of Rome supposes herself entitled to declare the catalogue of the sacred books, not in the way of testimony merely, but as of authority : which appears in her including of books, acknowledged by her best authors, not to

have been known as canonical in the early Church. There are some who refer, for a criterion, to the consenting testimony of a Christ within. And further, there are some who think we need no other evidence than the stamp of divinity, which may be traced in the excellent matter contained; which, by the way, is precisely the argument alleged by the Mussulmans, to prove the divine authority of their Koran. But when we consult any early writer, who has made this his subject, we find the ground taken to be that of human testimony. So far, indeed, were the fathers from supposing that there was an unerring standard, either in the will of constituted authority, or in divine monition to the mind; that at first there were rejected a few books which were afterwards received, in consequence of further inquiry and better information.

Ought it to be supposed, of the course marked out by them and trodden in by us, that it is the result of a low estimate of the doctrines and of the morality of the Gospel? By no means: but both they and we act in harmony with the injunction of an apostle, to be "ready to give an answer to every man." That the reason at hand should be such as ought to satisfy those to whom it is to be offered; according to the established principles on which, by the law of our nature, we generally act, seems evident. And why our own minds should take up with any species of proof, which we cannot offer to others, with the expectation of its being effective, is a matter for which no reason can be assigned.

If it should still be objected, that this is a resting of the genuineness of the sacred books on a lower species of evidence than such as their high contents

might warrant us to expect; let it be asked, is the objection against moral evidence, as such, or against the instance of it particularly in question? If the former, the difficulty extends to every branch of what is called natural religion; not excepting the being and the attributes of God. For when St. Paul says, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen;" here is nothing which notices the subject spoken of, as being submitted either to the senses or to the mensuration of lines and angles. But if the objection be intended of the instance of evidence applying to the present subject, there can hardly be conceived of any more convincing. It is precisely that which is relied on above every other in all the concerns of collective bodies. For look at the histories of states, in all the variety of their forms, and you will find that it is never contradicted, never questioned. The accounts of their several origins may be full of fable; which will be received or rejected by individuals, according to their respective measures of understanding. There may also be handed down to them the histories of former times; which will be judged of by every man, according to his opinion of the credibility of the writers, and of their sources of information. But that laws and institutions should be attested in any nation, from age to age, as the works of defined periods of time, and that the books recording them should be declared, on the like testimony, to be faithful records of their subjects; and especially when these are such as have had important effects on manners; and yet, that there should be at last detected an imposition in the original delivery; is an occurrence of which no his-

tory can give an instance. Far from it ; the records of such laws and such institutions may be lost, and yet may be presumed to have existed, merely in consequence of the remaining influence of them, over the habits of the social statē. The more there is contemplated the actual force of this species of evidence, in innumerable instances over the human mind, the more it will appear, that to sincere and candid persons no higher was necessary in reference to the canon of holy Scripture. At any rate, no higher has been bestowed ; and it becomes us gratefully to receive the evidences of our holy religion, as they are ; leaving to the deniers of it, arrogantly, and according to their custom, to determine what in their opinion it ought to and might have been.

There is something worthy of remark in the unanimity of testimony which the Church, in all the various places of her settlement, has borne to the integrity of the Scriptures handed down in her. In regard to the Old Testament, indeed, the Roman Catholic Church has added to the canon. But this does not affect the principle maintained ; because the witness in that department is the Jewish Church, and not the Christian. Now, among the Jews, until our Saviour's time, there was an acknowledgment of precisely the same books which Protestants receive, and of no others. And even since that time, the only exception is the exclusion of the prophet Daniel ; doubtless because of its very clear descriptions of their rejected Messiah ; although it has its place in the canon, as this is given by Josephus. In regard to the Scriptures of the New Testament, there is no diversity. And that this should be the case, after all the contentions which have taken place

in regard to the sense of their contents, would seem ascribable to nothing less than the good providence of God, which has preserved the sacred canon in such integrity, that the contending parties consent in it, however widely they may differ in the interpretation.

There may, further, be a use in remarking incidentally on this branch of the subject, the vast importance resulting from it to the position, that the Church, as a social body, is divinely instituted. There have been some who have avowed the opinion, that, although the Scriptures were given by inspiration, yet the means of extending a knowledge of their contents, and of sustaining the correspondent worship, are committed to human discretion merely. And it is to be feared, that the same opinion has an unperceived influence on many; there being no other way of accounting for the undisguised reference to personal considerations, in all their conduct relative to ecclesiastical concerns. Were the opinion correct, there would have been an unsuitableness in resting the sacred books on the testimony of social bodies, created by compact; and not having any necessary connexion with the sacred truths of which they are the depository. But if the Church be, as the article affirms, "the witness and the keeper of holy writ," there results from this a responsibility, which greatly criminates the interference of human passion, in the concerns of this divinely instituted body.

So much for the authenticity of the books of Scripture. The requisition applies, however, to our believing of them not only genuine, but true. Of course, the ground on which the latter rests becomes equally important with the other.

On this part of the subject, also, there have been endeavours to reduce truth to the standard of inward testimony, some referring it to one species of operation, and some to another, of the human mind. But if we consult the Scriptures themselves, the evidences to which they refer us, in proof of their divine authority, are entirely of a moral sort. If this should seem too feeble to any person, let him, before he renounce it for something apparently more luminous, be aware, that this may perhaps prove less stable : and let him at least weigh the evidence of which his conceptions are so low. Surely it will not be rash to affirm, that, as it is said in Scripture of the divine Being, "He left not himself without a witness," meaning in his works ; we may say of his interposition in the revelation of the Gospel, he has not left himself without a witness in the dispensation itself : meaning this, not merely of the record of the event, but of the agreement of the same with effects which no human contrivance could have produced, especially on the plan on which Christianity was published to the world, destitute as it was of any aids, either of the wisdom or of the power of man.

If we first consider the Scriptures as a connected chain of divine dispensations, given at different times, but all relative to the same object, that of the redemption ; this being at last brought about by the intervention of passions and prejudices, in which nothing was less contemplated than the end to which they were made subservient, such a mutual relation is itself an argument of divine design throughout the whole. For thus there is not a single prophecy, from the first dawn of prophetick information in Paradise, to the close of it in Malachi, which does not,

in the very circumstance of its having been delivered, and independently on its accomplishment, apply as an evidence of what was at last promulgated by the Gospel. And in the same point of view, there is scarcely a patriarchal or a Mosaick institution which does not at this day preach Christ to us ; independently on the collateral evidence of its fulfilment in the event which it prefigured.

If there is so much evidence in the existence of a connected chain of prophecies, and in the ordaining of typical institutions, how much more results from the opening on us of the anti-type in all his splendour ; and in his thus pointing to divine inspiration, as the only way of accounting for the announcing of events, which no human wisdom could have foreseen ! And this is an argument of revelation, not appearing with peculiar weight in the age in which it was given, and perhaps not with as great then, as in the succeeding ages ; in which the prophecies are still going on in a fulfilment, reaching to the consummation of all things.

Even in regard to the argument from miracles, it would be a mistake to consider it as consisting merely in a credible narrative of facts affirmed. It is not in this of itself, but as accompanied by certain effects in the visible state of the world, no otherwise to be accounted for ; and, independently on the cause here pointed to, in contrariety to all our theories of the human mind, and all our experience of human life.

In addition to this variety of evidence, there is the excellency of Christian morals ; in their being so fruitful of whatever can contribute to private satisfaction and to public peace ; an advantage which,

inestimable as it is, comes to us exceedingly enhanced in value, by the circumstance, that the morality of the Gospel is not, like that of the philosophers, influential only in the schools and on the higher orders of society ; but brings home its admonitions to the bosoms of the mass of the people ; by whose labours the state of society is upholden, and on whose submission to law and order it is most of all dependent.

And this is a recommendation of the Gospel which distinctly points to heaven for its origin ; in proportion as we compare different states of society with one another, in regard to the moral improvement respectively obtaining in them. For it will be found, notwithstanding all the boasts which have been made of the sufficiency of the reason of man, for the discovery of his true good, that the specious theory is contradicted by the state of morals in every form of society, wherein revelation is at this day unknown : which confirms the opinion, that in the ancient world there was nothing deserving the name of morals, except what was an imperfect remnant of a revelation originally communicated to our species.

That the apostles of our Saviour were content to rest the divine authority of the Gospel on the evidences here stated, and especially on the two pillars of the performance of miracle and the accomplishment of prophecy, appears through the whole of their transactions. There shall be adverted to a few circumstances only. We find St. Paul in his address to the Athenians, appealing to the miracle of the resurrection ; but in his speech to king Agrippa, varying his evidence to the character of his hearer,



and laying the chief stress on the prophecies of the Old Testament. And we find St. Peter, in what he says to heathen Cornelius, appealing to apostolick testimony in proof of the miraculous works of Christ ; and yet, in a varied manner, like that of his fellow-apostle, urging prophetick testimony in his speech to the assembled Sanhedrim. This shows that such were the evidences on which the truth of the Gospel was designed principally to rest. And if, as some imagine, these were to be referred to a permanent evidence of any other kind, it would be unaccountable that, while the subordinate evidence is made so prominent, the more important is entirely overlooked.

Let it not be understood that there is denied to arise in a pious and virtuous mind, not satisfaction only, but confirmatory evidence, on finding a suitableness in the Christian revelation to all the wants and the weaknesses of human nature ; especially in its bringing of relief under a sense of sin ; in its supplying of aid for the remedying of human weakness ; and, in short, in its illustrating of its powerful energy, by subduing corrupt propensity : and by moulding the temper, more and more, to the requisitions of the divine law and the standard of supreme perfection. So far as a man is conscious of this, he has found, by experience, that the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation." It can never, however, be a medium of conviction, through which he may address the understandings of other persons ; or even induce in his own mind the reception of truths, before unknown or doubted of. For this we must always appeal, like St. Paul, to "the demonstration of the Spirit and to power ;" that is, to prophecy

and miracle, which he certainly intended in these expressions, and to similar proofs on the visible face of Scripture.

Lest it should seem that the present statement has been needlessly engaged in, occasion is taken to remark, that it stands in opposition to various fancies, which set reason and revelation in contrariety. Of that description we may consider means of conversion which agitate the passions without conveying any information to the understanding; and according to which there are supposed assurances of salvation, without the possession of a particle of knowledge, either of the truths of our holy religion, or of the grounds on which it rests. Under the same class is the sentiment avowed by some, that the proper way of communicating the Gospel to those who are strangers to it, is by merely preaching Christ to them, in the offices in which he is designated in Scripture; leaving the issue to the operation of divine grace. It ought to be a subject of grief, when, in reading accounts of the labours of pious men, for the converting of Heathen nations, we find this the only ground on which the desired conversion was either attempted or expected. There is here no hesitation to express the opinion, that it in some measure accounts for the almost absolute inefficacy of their zeal and pains. And we cannot but believe, that when the time shall come, as it certainly will, when the nations now in heathen darkness shall be blessed with Gospel light, it will be through the medium of the same evidences on which it was originally carried to other nations, who now enjoy the benefit. Whether such a further extension will be accompanied by a miraculous power, as in the beginning, and agree-

ably to an opinion delivered by an eminent prelate of the Church of England, (Archbishop Tillotson,) is more than it is now possible to ascertain. But if there should be no such power, and until it is given, it seems essential to all such conversion, that it be accompanied by a knowledge, on historick testimony, of the states of the world connected with the series of evangelical events: without which it would seem that there cannot be any national reception of the same Gospel which was planted by the apostles; when "their sound went out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world."

This part of the discourse ought not to be left without its being suggested to candidates to make themselves more and more acquainted, as well with the occasion, the design, and the distinguishing properties of every book of Scripture, together with the grounds on which the Church has included it in the canon, as with the evidences of the divine authority of the whole Bible, in relation to all the points to which they apply, and as cleared from all the objections which the enemies of our faith have set against them; objections grounded on false statements, on bold assertions, and, most of all, on methods of reasoning, which, pursued into their consequences, are not more hostile to the revealed religion than to moral virtue. Were candidates for the deaconship designed to be stationary in that grade, perhaps less knowledge might serve, than under the present circumstances, of their looking forward to the priesthood. In this, an inability to give satisfactory answers to the infidel sentiments which have been propogated of late years, with a sort of apostolick zeal, and with which they will continually run

the hazard of being assailed, will not only expose their insufficiency, but shake the faith of those who may be within the hearing ; and who, unless better informed than those within whose professional sphere the subject more especially lies, may be tempted to think that cause desperate, which even the designated guardians of it are not capable of defending.

**QUESTION IV.** "Will you diligently read the same, (that is, the books of the Old and New Testament,) in the church where you shall be appointed to serve ?"

On what ground the office of reading is here especially mentioned, as attached to the diaconship, will be a question coming, with similar matters, under the next head. Under the present there shall only be remarked the circumstance in the system, that such reading is considered as a part of the service not to be dispensed with.

Of the many marks manifested by this Church, of her being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, there may be considered the importance which she gives to the public reading of the Holy Scriptures, as not one of the least. There is no branch of the service of the primitive Church more demonstrative than this. In the apology of Justin Martyr, edited within half a century of the decease of the last of the apostles ; and in the account which the apologists gives of the worship of the Christian assemblies of his day, this is distinctly noticed, as a part of it. Of similar testimonies from other fathers, there might be produced very many ; proving also, that the same reading took up a considerable proportion of the time. But it is not necessary to be parti-

cular; the facts affirmed being not questioned. In proportion to the growth of popery, there ensued an abridgment of the practice, until it became confined to a few select portions, under the name of Epistles and Gospels; being much the same with those which now bear the name in the communion-service of this Church. And it is not to be doubted, that even these scanty, but judicious selections, afforded some light, under the general spread of the dark cloud which for ages hung over the whole Christian world.

When England threw off the yoke of Rome, the importance of restoring the old and edifying practice was distinctly seen and acted on by her reformers. But when there seceded from that Church persons, who formed new communions, partly on the professed principle that her liturgy was lifeless, and that piety was to be promoted by the abandonment of forms of prayer; this was accompanied, and it would seem naturally, with some, by an entire exclusion of the reading of the Scriptures; and with others, by a very limited exercise of this sort. The truth is, it does not harmonize with that degree of animal fervour which has been affected in the separations here alluded to. The same has happened, in others of a more recent date. Concerning all these societies, it is not unnatural to conceive, as to what may be deemed error in their systems, that the continuance of it has been in a great measure owing to the dropping of the reading of the Scriptures, or else to the reading of them in a very scanty measure. Were there shown any one of them which has returned to primitive integrity in this particular, it would be a temptation to predict, that before long such a society would abandon the extravagancies of its original separation.

There shall be concluded this article by remarking, of both deacons and the other orders of the ministry, the propriety of their perceiving in the exercise here the subject, that it is a declaring of the glad tidings of salvation, not mixed, as sometimes happens in their own discourses, with human imperfection. They may be assured, that the Gospel, so read, is often brought home to the consciences and the affections of the hearers, by the same holy Spirit which inspired it. And hence there arises a strong inducement in those less showy departments of administration, to aim at that gravity and that correctness which are likely to aid in the impressing of important truths and lessons, delivered to the people from their unadulterated source.

QUESTION V. After laying down the peculiar duties of a deacon, demands—"Will you do this, gladly and willingly?"

It would seem impossible to read the duties of the deaconship, as delineated immediately before the present question, without some degree of painful sensibility, occasioned by the palpable inconsistency of practice, as well in England as in this country.

But before the bringing forward of any sentiments to this effect, it will be proper to answer an objection made by some, against the extension of the duty of the lowest order of the ministry, beyond the serving of tables; that is, the care of the poor, as laid on them in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. That this was the object especially in contemplation, is indeed evident in the passage referred to. And that it must be desirable to keep in view the same original designation, as a prominent branch of the

employment, may be conceded. But that these considerations restrain the Church from exercising the order, in some departments not noticed in the history of the transaction which gave an ecclesiastical being to it, is a consequence not to be allowed. Independently on this remark, the very early records of duties laid on deacons, beyond the single duty of administering to the poor, afford a strong presumption, that such accession of labour had taken place even in the days of the apostles. Thus, when we read in the passage now the subject, "It appertaineth to the office of a deacon in the Church, where he shall be appointed to serve, to assist the priest in divine service, and especially when he ministereth the Holy Communion, and to read holy Scriptures and Homilies in the Church, and to instruct the youth in the Catechism;" there is nothing of which we do not find abundant evidence of its being generally practiced in the primitive Church; and how this should have happened in different places, distant from one another, without its having grown out of usage, introduced under the eyes and with the approbation of the first teachers of Christianity, it is not easy to conceive. This Church goes on to instance, as another branch of duty, "in the absence of the priest, to baptize infants." - That a deacon might, at least in the case of an emergency, baptize not only infants, but an adult, appears within two chapters of the narrative of the institution of the order, where we read of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip, recently appointed a deacon. The allowance of deacons to baptize is therefore lawful. When infants are specified, it may be supposed to be in reference to ordinary occasions; and grounded on

the expediency of an approbation from a higher grade of the ministry, of the fitness of a presented adult. And when the matter is limited to times of the absence of the priest, it may be an intimation, that the office is more properly his, although lawfully permitted to the deacon. Further, when it is added, "and to preach, if he be admitted thereto by the bishop;" it is probable with the same view of upholding the difference of grade. The preamble goes on to add, "furthermore it is his office, where provision is so made, to search for the sick, poor, and impotent people of his parish; to intimate their estates, names, and places where they dwell, to the curate, that by his exhortation they may be relieved with the alms of the parishioners or others." And here it is much to be wished, that this were sustained as well by practice as by theory, to be a part of the designation of a deacon.

Of the improvement here intimated, there can be little hope, until the Church shall think it expedient to ordain to the office of deacons, some of whom no expectation is entertained that they will rise to a higher order of the ministry. And where would be the impropriety, or rather how comely as well as useful would it prove, if, even in churches provided with incumbents, there were a religious person of each church following some secular employment, yet managing any revenues appropriated to the poor, under a designation known to be permanent, and from the source of all ecclesiastical authority? Which expedient might be so conducted, as to leave the tenure of property where it is, in the hands of church-wardens and vestrymen: to whom also there should be an accountability, for the disposal of



monies in the deacon's hands. But the institution would be still more useful in places in which, because of the small number or the poverty of the people, there can be no permanent provision for a minister devoting his whole time to the service of the sanctuary ; an evil, which would be in some measure remedied by the appointment to the diaconship of a proper character, wherever it should offer, with the view not only of his distributing to the poor, but further, for the reading of the Scriptures and discourses, and for baptizing. It cannot but be supposed, that his reading of prayers and of sermons of approved divines, would carry more weight than when it is done, as occasionally at present, by a layman ; although this, where necessary, is commendable.

While there is thus held out the utility of an alteration in our practice, it is not wished to be understood as a proposal to hazard the accomplishment of it, by an imprudent haste ; especially by producing such dissatisfaction as might endanger the peace of the communion. But there is perceived no impropriety in the expressing of the opinion, countenanced as it is by avowed principles of this Church ; from which there is a deviation in practice, although in points not materially affecting either truth or order.

In the preceding statement of the duties of a deacon, he is presumed not to preach, but by the permission of the bishop. Notwithstanding the declared wish, that matters were brought to the condition, in which there would be some deacons not intending to be priests ; yet as this does not apply at present, and as the exigencies of the Church make a claim for the extension of the permission to preach

as far as shall be consistent with settled order, it is probably considered as given to every candidate who is ordained.

**QUESTION VI.** “Will you apply all your diligence to frame and fashion your own lives and the lives of your families, according to the doctrine of Christ, and to make both yourselves and them, as much as in you lieth, wholesome examples of the flock of Christ?”

Here are three particulars; the good life of the person promising, the good lives of his family, and the salutary influence of both, in the way of example to the Church.

There can hardly be occasion of bringing authorities from Scripture, to prove the obligation on every clergyman, of whatever order, to a holy life and conversation. On a subject so far from admitting doubt, it will be sufficient barely to intimate, and that not as instruction, but in the way of reminding concerning matters of which information may be presumed, what is implied in the demand which the Church makes under the present head.

Every candidate will, in the first place, perceive how inconsistent his engagement would be with any sin in which he might at present live, and of course with any into which he might fall in future. For what would this be, but the unsaying, in the unequivocal language of the conduct, of what would be said in public discourses, in the hypocritical language of the lips? Or if there be cases to which hypocrisy does not apply—and indeed it must be confessed, that there have been some clergymen not at the pains to hide their immoralities from the world—the

difference is only this, that he is released from the charge of that vice to be loaded with another, the personating of a character not his own ; and no otherwise to be supported, but by the use of language, which, however pious in itself, becomes in his mouth profane. And it cannot be doubted, that every thing of this sort contributes much to the increase of immorality and infidelity.

What has been here said is far short even of the negative part of the obligation lying on a minister of the Gospel. For it is evident, that he may carefully avoid every scandalous immorality, and yet be marked by such levity, by such indifference, and by such devotion to the world, as prove unequivocally, that nothing is further from being the object of his zeal and of his affections, than the duties to which he had engaged himself by the most sacred promises. So far as decorum and the good order of society are concerned, there must be allowed a difference between such a character and the other noted ; but in regard to any usefulness to the Christian Church, in addressing the instructions of the Gospel to the consciences, and its consolations to the hopes of men, there is no material difference between the two ; and the world is not likely to overlook, in either of them, the contrariety between the character and the profession. But it is a slender ground of commendation of a clergyman, that he avoids whatever is in direct contrariety to the letter and to the spirit of his calling. He pledges himself to much more ; to the cultivation of all the virtues, which can either adorn him personally, or apply to the various relations in which he stands. Here it would be easy to display a splendid assemblage of Gospel graces, universally confessed

to be ornamental to any man, but especially looked for in the man of God. To all this, however, there will perhaps be opposed the consideration of the imperfection of human nature, in order to show in relation to what is true in theory, that considerable allowance must be made in practice. Now, since it cannot be denied, that human virtue will be imperfect at the best; it may be worth the while to ascertain, in what shape the plea affects the argument. The line of distinction is here understood to be, that where the mind manifests the positive evidences of substantial virtue, allowance is to be made for the mistakes, and even for the frailties, which occasionally prevent the application of correct principles to questions of conduct which occur; but that in regard to persons, in whom there is no high and ruling principle, and this evidenced in the general life, frailty is but another name for depraved passion, and imperfection for vicious conduct.

The extension of the care of the Church from the personal conduct of the candidate to that of his family cannot but be seen proper; when it is considered, that there is no line in which his personal character may be more clearly traced. For that a man should have his own mind impressed by the truths of religion, and yet that he should be indifferent to their influence over those in whose happiness he is the most deeply interested, and much more, that he should, without concern, behold them addicted to any corrupt practices or opinions, is so evidently impossible, that it is equally so not to impute indifference of this sort to a want of faith in the subjects of publick ministration, or at best, to its not interesting of his affections.

It is known to all, that it is in a limited sense, in which one human being can be responsible for another; and that this applies, although in a lower degree, in respect to those who stand to us in such a relation as subjects them in some measure to our command. But even here, a distinction should be taken, between those matters which are properly the subjects of command, and those in which what is good can be effected by persuasion only. The minister who endures, in his family, any thing which is a breach of good morals, subjects himself to the reproach passed of old on Eli, "that his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." To induce the piety of the heart, and to what is positively amiable in the conduct, lies within the province of persuasion. There are some well intentioned parents, and it may be supposed that there is occasionally a clergyman of the number, who obtrude the duties of religion on their families, in a tone of authority so high, as to create disgust. Better it is, that his family should be witnesses of the happy effect on his temper, and on his hopes, of the truths which he inculcates. For although it does not dispense with precept, yet it materially influences the dress in which precept should be clothed. The great Father of all condescends to draw his children with the cords of love; and earthly parents must use the same means, if they would incite to the same end, which is the homage and obedience of the inward man.

It must be evident how much the accomplishment of this is dependent on the discretion with which the matrimonial connexion is engaged in, and a choice made of a partner in the care of a common offspring.

There can be no doubt of the difficulty of laying down rules, by which future character in this or in any other line can be ascertained: and therefore all intended in regard to it, is the general remark, that the man who selects such a companion, without a view to the continuance of the attendant friendship beyond the scanty term of life, does not possess or deserve any security, either for substantial happiness, or for educating the fruits of the connexion in principles which can prepare them for this life or for another.

But, as was remarked, the Church contemplates the conduct of the candidate on the subjects stated, as it may render himself and his family "wholesome examples to the flock of Christ." In regard to his family, they cannot be supposed of especial importance to his flock, any further than as it is his conduct which speaks through theirs. But both in his own conduct and in that of those about him, if delinquency be countenanced or connived at, it is a counteracting, by ecclesiastical influence, of what is declared on the ground of ecclesiastical authority and recommendation.

It is said, indeed, that the ungodly example of the minister should be lost sight of in the divinity of his doctrine, and the utility of his precepts; and it must be confessed a sign of no small advancement in a holy temper, when a private Christian can attend on the public service of the Church, without hindrance of his devotion, although not without grief, from the wicked example of him who ministers. But the question is, not concerning what grace may accomplish, or what duty may require, but of what may be expected to take place in the common course of

things, and consistently with the prejudices of mankind. On this ground it may be pronounced confidently, that while all wicked doers have much to answer for, not only on personal account, but because of the mischief of their example, there is an immense increase of this responsibility, on the head of an ungodly minister, whose example operates, not only like that of others, to the conciliating of the disposition, but, besides this, to the corrupting of the conscience.

In regard to every candidate, therefore, it is to be hoped, that there will often occur to him the additional degree of obligation, resulting from his pledging of himself voluntarily, and at a mature age, to his faithful endeavours for the performance of his religious and moral duties; which indeed are indispensable, independently on such an engagement, while yet this should make them the more impressive on his conscience. His promises, however, will not be likely to be influential, without his frequently making of them a test of self-examination, conducted under a sense of the presence of the great Searcher of hearts. And to this he may be incited by the encouragement warranted by the divine word, that it will be a mean of all the aid necessary to the sustaining of him in his ministerial course, and to his at last finishing of it with joy.

**SEVENTH AND LAST QUESTION.** “Will you reverently obey your bishop, and other chief ministers, who, according to the canons, may have the charge and government over you, following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions?”

On this point there should be observed a proper

medium between the relinquishment of a right given, not on any personal account, but for the maintaining of the good order of the Church, and the setting up of claims, which may give scope to private prejudice and passion.

When the question speaks of other ministers, it cannot be considered as applying strictly to any other dioceses than those which have been subdivided, with presiding clergymen appointed over the several districts. Nevertheless, it would be unseemly in any clergyman, especially a deacon, to be indifferent to the advice, or indignant under the admonition of his seniors, who may be supposed, from religious motives, to feel an interest in the prosperity of the communion, and who have a right to take all reasonable measures to secure its reputation, even on account of a connexion of it with their own.

When the passage speaks of godly admonitions, it must have respect to some standard, by which they should be directed. This standard must be the various established institutions of the Church, and not the private opinion of the bishop. It is well known, that the Church from which this is descended, like the state to which it is allied, is under a government of law and not of will: and we cannot suppose that ours, professing to follow it in the leading features of its system, should have designed to reject this, so congenial to the still more moderate degree of authority, which it will be possible in present circumstances to exert. If it should be asked, Who shall be the arbiter, on any question which may be raised, as to the fitness of the interposition of the bishop? The answer is, the question being understood of admonition, out of the line of strict ecclesiastical pro-



ceeding, which ought of course to be governed by a determinate standard, that each party must judge for himself, as he shall answer for this and for every other part of his conduct to Almighty God. That injudicious or even impertinent interference is possible ought not to be denied, and cannot be justified. But there are two descriptions of cases to which no such censure is applicable : one is, when an offence against morals, the other, when an offence against order is the subject. In either of these cases, indeed, the admonition of the bishop would be unseasonable, unless the offence were notorious and admitted ; because he would otherwise be in danger of making himself an accuser, where he is appointed to be a judge. But if either of the species of offence be acknowledged by the offending party, and especially if it be justified and persevered in, there is here claimed to the bishop the right in question, not only on the ground of ecclesiastical law, but on that of the consent of the party, in the answer to the question last read ; which may be considered as a personal contract, binding him to submission under reproof for past faults ; and to amendment, under exhortation relative to the time to come.

The series of sentiment arising out of the questions being gone through, there ought not to be withheld a remark, which has often occurred in the contemplating of them. It relates to the opinion entertained by some, that in the business of ordination there ought to be a scrutiny into what are called the experiences of the candidates. If this opinion be correct, there ought indeed to be acknowledged the deficiency, and even the unfaithfulness of this Church, and of the Church from which

she comes. Accordingly, it may be considered as falling in with the subject to defend them in this particular. Let there not be misunderstood, the objecting to the thing alluded to, as if it were thought that exterior conduct is the only field in which religious principle is to act ; or that there can be an inward influence of it, without the consciousness of the party. If there be felt by any, as one of the Church articles expresses it, "a working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and drawing up the mind to high and heavenly things ;" this, with whatever is the result of it, in devout affections, and in any thing else worthy of the source of supreme good, must be a matter of sensibility before it can manifest itself in act. Even on this part of the subject, however, we are entitled to believe, from what we may read and from what we hear concerning those who affect the pretended improvement, that they mean something superadded to the experience which has been described, and of a very different complexion. But even on the supposition, that they would exact nothing visionary or erroneous, the requisition would be censurable on these two grounds ; that it is unauthorized, or rather impliedly discountenanced by Scripture ; and that the possible use of it is far more than counterbalanced by the probable or rather certain abuse.

It is here said to be unauthorized by Scripture, under a conviction that the challenge may be safely made to the producing of any passage in which it is found. And it is said to be impliedly discountenanced, because there are two passages, one in the third chapter of the Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, and the other in the first chapter of the Epistle to

Titus; in which the apostle professedly, and as a directory to persons to whom the business of ordination had been committed, lays down qualifications of the ministerial character; but without a word which can be perverted to the requiring of this, supposed by its advocates the most material of all. And when there is spoken of the probable or rather certain abuse, the meaning is to tyranny and to hypocrisy; and this, not by such incidental consequence as may be entailed on any expedient generally good; but by means of a natural relation between the measure and the mischief to which it leads. The experiment was once made, not in the Church of England, but in that country, during a temporary downfall of its Church; and the consequent evils were so many, and are so well attested, as to be a security against the return of the error, while she shall retain any thing of herself besides her name; and also against the inroad of the same error on the order of this Church, so long as there shall remain any trace of communion with the Church of England, besides the bare fact of our having derived from her its descent.

If what has been now said should be conceived of by any candidate as countenancing the idea, that his life being unstained by immorality, he is qualified for the ministry without piety, without the subduing of natural corrupt affection, and without a concern for the extending of the spiritual kingdom of the Redeemer; it is declared to him, that if, under such a mistake, he have advanced thus far in the pursuit of the ministerial commission, the advice to him is, to stop at the threshold, and not profane the sanctuary by entering it in a state of mind in which the

responsibility to be assumed by him will not be sustained, either with satisfaction to himself or with usefulness to the Church of God. On the contrary, he will be heaping on his head a heavy load of guilt. But while so much depends on his consciousness of the movements of his mind, the Church does wisely, in resting her satisfaction on the promises which he is to make, in the solemn transaction that lies before him. An explanation of them has been now attempted ; although misunderstood, if it should seem to rest a fitness for the ministry on any ground that dispenses with the power of religion over the heart.

Far from this ; that the power may be felt by all those who shall be ordained to any grade of the ministerial calling, and that this discourse may have some tendency to so happy an effect, is the sincere desire, and will be a subject of the prayers, of him by whom it has been prepared.



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A  
COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
QUESTIONS IN THE OFFICE  
FOR THE  
ORDAINING OF PRIESTS.

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## PREFATORY ADDRESS.

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**BROTHER [OR BRETHREN,]**

IN the solemn admonition which the Bishop, agreeably to the ordinal, addresses to every candidate for the priesthood, before his making of the professions and the promises exacted of him, it is presumed that there had been held up to him the importance of that grade of the ministry, in his "private examination." Although this may be done by oral statements, made personally, it has appeared to me, that they will be more likely to be effective, if submitted to perusal in retirement ; in which, they may be more deliberately weighed, and more closely brought home to the consciousness of the party's ; and all, with the accompaniment of prayer.

The ground-work of what is to be delivered are the questions in the service ; in like manner, as in ordination to the diaconship, the questions in the service for that grade were the ground on which the



duties proper to it were founded. Some of the questions and answers are common to the two services; and shall therefore be unnoticed at present, except by intreating a re-perusal of them. The greater magnitude of the points especially belonging to the priesthood will require more lengthened remarks; although they will be still far from doing justice to their respective subjects; and should rather be received as hints intended to give a direction to present and future meditation. They will at least serve the purpose of a solemn declaration of the ordainer, of his construction of the promises of the ordained. Although in the case of error in the former, the promises will not be armed, by his opinions, with senses not contemplated by the Church of which he is the organ; yet it is to be hoped of every candidate, that he will be aware of the responsibility attached to any endeavour to diminish the import of the words which he is to take on his tongue.

There seems a desire to guard against the danger of this, by the solemnities with which the promises are clothed. The high tone of the precedent address, its concluding with the intimation that the engagements are to be made in the presence of God and of his Church, the short invocation made by the Bishop for the faithful performance of the engagements, the invocation of the Holy Spirit immediately before the imposition of hands, the call made on the congregation to put up their secret prayers, and the

sealing of the transaction in a participation of the memorials of the body and the blood of Christ, are so many expedients for the upholding of the sanctity of the act. The object is still kept in view in the concluding prayers, put up in the name of all present, in respect to the presbyter or the presbyters now duly constituted, that "we may have grace to hear and receive what [he or] they shall deliver out of the word of God, or agreeably to the same, as the means of our salvation." The implication to the Bishop and the other clergy, that they are not now above their being profited by their younger [brother or] brethren, is also to [him or] them an intimation of their unworthiness of the station, if it have been entered on without a due estimate of its duties.

It is for the purpose of additional security against so great sin, and so great injury to the Church, that the perusal of the following commentary is required.

WM. WHITE.



## ORDINATION OF PRIESTS.

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QUESTION I. "Do you think, in your heart, that you are truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and according to the canons of this Church, to the order and ministry of priesthood?"

Under two of the questions there will be no need to say any thing; because they are precisely the same with those in the ordination of deacons.

There may be a use in intimating, that the sentiments to be brought forward are to be considered as explanatory, not as argumentative. This distinction applies as well to the remarks which have been made on the service for deacons, as to these now intended as relative to the priesthood. But it is the more important to note it under the latter, because of the great variety of the matter; which would otherwise exact investigations, embracing almost the whole of our ecclesiastical system. It is true, that in each of the departments of this commentary, there is the necessity of adverting occasionally to the arguments on which the decisions of the Church are grounded; but it is only when a view of the

argument is essential to the purpose of explanation.

To some it may seem a material omission, that, in this service, there is no such question as the first in the service for deacons—"Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost?" And, indeed, if this demand had been designed to carry the sense which has been imposed on it, of an inward summons to the ministry, distinct as was that outward call of St. Paul in a voice from heaven, this would seem the place more especially calling for it; because now, and not before, the candidate presents himself for the reception of an authoritative commission to preach the Gospel. Accordingly, the silence in this place confirms the interpretation given of that important question, which was explained as requiring the consciousness of there being no unworthy motive to the ministry: and of there being the influence of the true motive, directed to the end specified in the question—"to serve God for the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his people." And even in regard to this, although the motive inquired after is a matter of consciousness, yet the Church, aware of the difficulty of self-knowledge, and the danger of self-deception, demands a declaration, not of assurance but of trust.

Still it may be asked, Why is not the same trust exacted in the more important act of an admission to the priesthood? There would seem to be no good reason besides this; that the governing principle being supposed to have been secured in the first service, it is presumed in that succeeding. The subject may be illustrated by a comparison taken from domestic life. The steward of a large household, in admitting to an office in it, may be supposed

to make inquiries, the design of which would be the ascertaining whether there were an inward cast of character, qualifying for the master's service. And yet he might dispense with this, in elevating from a lower to a higher grade ; integrity of principle being required equally in both. In like manner, if the deacon have been sincere in his former answer, he may be presumed to be still under the same bent of disposition : especially when presented by a presbyter of standing in the Church, who testifies concerning the presented party, that he has inquired concerning him, and examined him, and thinks him meet for the priesthood ; and when the bishop can truly say, that, after due inquiry, " he finds not to the contrary ;" that the same party " is lawfully called to his function and ministry ; and that he is a person meet for the same." But we have reason to presume, that if the Church had designed to rest a warrant for the exercise of the ecclesiastical function, on the persuasion of a call to it in the party's mind, any question framed to this effect would have been inserted in the service for the ordination of priests, to which it would especially belong ; and not in the service for the ordination of deacons, which is so far from being considered as clothing the deacon with an independent power to preach, that he is reminded of his having no such power, " unless admitted thereto by the bishop."

It must be evident, that the first question in the present service has the same relation to the priesthood which the second in the other service has to the diaconship. They are intended to guard, as well against the insufficiency of qualification, which lenity might overlook, as against the impositions

sometimes practised by those who certify what is contrary to their knowledge, or at least not within it. With this, any candidate under the government of conscience, would be the less likely to come forward, from the knowledge that he must, in so solemn a form, join in any falsehood which may have been fabricated to secure his admission to the ministry.

In this part of the address, there ought not to be neglected the opportunity of opening what is taken to be the meaning of the words "priesthood" and "priests."

Priesthood is the office or ecclesiastical standing of a person of the order of priests ; for when it is taken in a more extensive sense, comprehending the three orders of the ministry, there is a use of the word not warranted by the practice of early antiquity, or of the Church of which we are members, but springing from an erroneous system, against which it is here intended to give a caution.

The word "priest," is evident the Greek word *Πρεσβυτερος*, so far changed as to have a termination suited to the English language. In Scripture, the words *ιερευς*, and *Πρεσβυτερος*, denote characters far from being the same : and if it had happened that our language had been supplied with a rendering of the former word by some name not similar in sound to the latter, perhaps much of the confusion here lamented would have been guarded against.

It is well known that many of the errors of the Romish Church involve the presumption, that the Christian ministry is analogous, and in succession to the Jewish priesthood. To this theory there occur these three objections : First, the dissimilarity obvious on the face of the institutions. Under the law, the

priest stood between God and man, offering to the Creator the sacrifice, and with it the devotions of the creature, in a manner corresponding with the imperfect nature of the legal economy; but not comporting with the nature of the evangelical, under which all are invited "to draw nigh to God with the full assurance of faith." Again, agreeably to the preceding sentiment, the Epistle to the Hebrews is express and particular in declaring, that all pertaining to the ancient priesthood had been fulfilled in the person of "the High Priest of our profession." And further, had the affirmed analogy been intended, it would have been natural to have perpetuated under the Gospel, the names consecrated and become familiar under the law; which was not done, but new names were introduced. It has been said, indeed, to have been owing to the impropriety of setting up one priesthood against another; the Jewish being confessedly authoritative among the Jews, until the destruction of their polity. But how did it happen that there was no intimation of a succeeding priesthood, to take place when the other should cease? How did it happen that, after its ceasing, apostolick men do not appear to have performed any act, or to have uttered any sentiments, for the effecting of the change that has been contended for? In short, how did it happen that the new name never showed its head until the latter end of the second, or the beginning of the third century; that, in the course of the latter, it grew but slowly into use; and that it did not become sanctioned by custom until the fourth? Doubtless it was then the familiar style of many holy men, who little thought of the gross errors to which it would lead.



The influence of it in generating and sustaining some of the worst errors of the Roman Catholick Church, was clearly discerned by the great and good men who took the lead in the reformation of the Church of England. Accordingly, although agreeably to their plan uniformly adhered to, of not changing for the sake of change, they retained the words "priest" and "priesthood," sanctioned by their etymology; yet, that they had not an idea of the former as *ιερευς*, nor of the latter as *ιερεουσυνη*, is evident. For in the latin liturgy, designed to be of equal authority with the English, they use the words "presbyter" and "presbyterium"—not "sacerdos" and "sacerdotium:" by which last, and not by the two former Latin words, the preceding Greek words are translated. Even in the question under consideration, there may be discerned the sense of the Church on the present subject. For if "priesthood" had been designed by her as a term comprehensive of the whole Christian ministry, which is contended for by those who advocate the system here denied, it would have been incongruous to address the candidate, as presented for the order of priesthood, [*ordinem presbyteriatu*s,] without distinguishing the intended grade; he being already in one of the three orders, while there is yet another higher.

QUESTION II. "Are you persuaded, that the Holy Scriptures contain all doctrine required as necessary to eternal salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ?" And are you determined, out of the said Scriptures, to instruct the people committed to your charge; and to teach nothing as necessary to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be per-

suaded may be concluded and proved by the Scriptures ? ”

In this question there are contemplated a persuasion and a promise.

The persuasion is of the propriety of a prominent characteristick of all Protestant churches ; the holding of the sufficiency of Scripture as a rule of faith, and a directory of practice. And this is well known to be the leading line of distinction between them and the Church of Rome.

As the objections of the latter turn on the hinge of the insufficiency of written documents to the occurring occasions of different times, it is natural to suppose, that in settling the present point, our Church looked back on the Jewish economy, and inquired, what provision there had been made in it for the guarding against a difficulty, which, if existing at all must have been precisely the same in the Jewish Church. No such expedient was adopted in that instance by divine wisdom. There was a priesthood to administer in the offices of the dispensation instituted ; and there is a ministry for the same purpose in the Christian Church : but in neither case is there the gift of infallibility, for the guarding against error. And the argument applies with an increase of force, in consequence of two circumstances under the Jewish economy, of which there is not any thing similar pretended under the Christian. One of the circumstances is, the high priest's asking counsel of God by Urim and Thummim : which was always for direction in a special case occurring, and never for the resolving of questions in reference to doctrine. The other is the succession of prophets raised up from time to time ; for these, however

guided by inspiration, and having an insight into futurity, never extended their authority to the determining of controversies; the law and the testimony being considered as fully accommodated to all needful information.

This is a sufficient answer to the supposed necessity, which many have avowed as the point on which their attachment to the Romish communion rested—because of its being furnished with a living judge in controversies. If indeed it be possible to find such a judge commissioned in the New Testament, we ought not to be prejudiced against his authority, on account of there being nothing like it in the Old. But where are the documents of such an appointment? The one principally alleged, is the promise, that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church:” “The gates of hell,” or *Ἅδης*, that is, the invisible world, to which the passage is by death. The promise amounts to an assurance that the Church shall be coeval with the world. It is not stronger than many assurances given to the Jews, of the perpetuity of the covenant made with them: and yet this hindered not but that there were many and even general defections to idolatry, under which the Church was still preserved, however corrupt her members in faith and manners.

What greatly confirms the principle here advocated, is the utter uncertainty of there being any standard other than that of Scripture. The Romanists are exceedingly divided among themselves as to this point. They who vest the infallibility in St. Peter, and in the popes as his successors,—although this is done only by those who profess such an unlimited submission to the see of Rome, as Roman Catholics

generally abhor,—have the advantage both of simplicity and of consistency. But there is in Scripture such an absolute dearth of evidence of St. Peter's authority over the other apostles; while yet there is the record of another apostle's withstanding of him to the face, in a matter that concerned faith as well as practice; and further, it is so evident from history,—for here Scripture will not be pretended to have spoken,—that if St. Peter resided at Rome, it is more certain that he resided, and for a longer time, at Antioch; and still further, there is such entire silence,—as the candid of the Roman Catholick historians acknowledge,—as to any respect paid by the very early Christians to the Church of Rome, above the Churches of the other principal cities of Christendom; that the point of papal infallibility is but feebly maintained, even within the bounds of that communion. And what ought to place the matter beyond all doubt, are the instances of popes who have been censured by the whole Church, not for mal-practice only, but for heterodoxy also, as in the instance of Liberius in the fourth century, and of Honorius in the seventh.

Still, when the Roman Catholicks look beyond the popes for the infallibility, they entangle themselves in endless difficulties. If there be set up the decisions of general councils, it becomes difficult to ascertain what circumstances are necessary to the constituting of such bodies; and even whether there ever has existed an individual council of this description. Those the most generally respected, and which were held in the fourth century, were summoned by the emperors, and were rather councils of the Christians within their dominions. And, indeed,

the necessity of general councils could never have been in contemplation in the divine economy in Scripture ; because this was fitted to the Church, under whatever circumstances she might be placed ; whereas it might interfere with the prerogatives of secular authorities, that citizens or subjects should repair, without leave, to a distant land, on the summons of a foreign prince or prelate ; and especially of both these characters in the same person. And then, what is to be said, when councils, nearly equal in number, contradict each other ? This is what has happened. But to fit the case, union with, and subjection to the bishop of Rome, is interposed as the test by which to distinguish between a true and a false council. But what foundation can there be for this, when, in the earliest councils, there was not even the presidency of the bishops of Rome, much less their controlling pleasure ?

The last resort is to tradition. The ablest of the Roman Catholick authors rest principally on this ; so that whatever weight they ascribe to councils, it is declaratory of traditionary doctrine, originating in inspiration, and descending in the Episcopal succession. But there can be nothing less consistent than this, with the very course which the Church of Rome adopts, for the establishing of truth, and the exterminating of error. There is convened a general council, or what is so denominated. The points are put to issue, and opposite sides are taken by different bishops, not charged with heretical pravity. In the end, the matters litigated are determined by a majority of voices : and supposing them all to acquiesce in the major vote, yet how evidently had the stream of tradition run wide of the dissentients

and their respective flocks, until restored to its channel by this human management ! Considering also how rarely such occasions occur—it being two hundred years since the last, and generally supposed that there will never be another—how incompetent must tradition be, to the imagined necessity of a living judge in controversy ! In the council of Trent, here alluded to, it is notorious, that a great proportion of the prelates were men of high rank, who had never concerned themselves with theological controversies, and who stood in need of the discussions of learned divines, not members of the council, in order to be prepared to vote when the questions should be decided on. Were such men the receptacles of the unerring standard of tradition ? In the account of the proceedings there seems nothing like it, or of their imagining of themselves to be so.

That branch of the question before us which exacts a promise, divides itself into a positive and a negative part. The positive part is, that the future minister will, out of the Scriptures, instruct the people committed to his charge.

It is agreeable to every part of the question to suppose, that each clause of it has an aspect on the Church of Rome, and was intended to guard against her errors, both in faith and in practice. One of the abuses of the latter sort was, a practice which had been introduced in the middle ages, and was, perhaps, at its height at the time of the reformation, for preachers to entertain their hearers with discourses on the lives and the virtues of saints ; and those very often either fabulous or insignificant : not only so in proof of doctrine, there were commonly quoted the decisions of councils, and the opinions of ancient

authors, as though of equal authority with holy writ. And what aggravated the evil, many of the authorities, then held high, are in later times confessed, by learned Romanists, to have been forgeries. Of such abuse there seems but little danger in the present day.

But although the circumstance stated may be supposed to have principally given occasion to the words now before us, yet they fall with their whole weight on any more recent modes of preaching, in which the sense of Scripture is not so prominent as it evidently stood in the contemplation of those by whom our ecclesiastical system was framed, or rather restored, to the standard of times much earlier than those from the practice of which it was intended to depart. Now there is a certain sort of sermons, of which it would hardly be guessed that they were designed as such, or that they had any connexion with the Christian dispensation, if notice were not given of these things, by a passage of Scripture under the name of a text. Possibly, the subject of the sermon may be the same with that of the text; which, however, might be exchanged for something from one of the Heathen moralists, without any injury to the body of the sermon; there being no opening of the sense of the Holy Spirit in that passage, from the words which precede, or from those which follow, and no confirming of any doctrine originating from either, by suitable passages from other parts of Scripture, much less any endeavours to bring home the declarations of God's word to the hearts of the hearers, further than may be found in that species of inference or application, in which a counsellor may be supposed to sum up his argument to a bench

of learned judges, who have neither prejudices to bias their understandings against the truth, nor passions indisposing them to receive it. But what is here considered as one of the most offensive circumstances in this species of preaching is, the little regard paid in the choice of subjects, or in the manner of stating them, to the degree in which they are likely to be interesting to the minds of either saints or sinners. What though a discourse be ingenious, it ought indeed to be eminently so to render this a counterbalance to the disgust which the mind may reasonably entertain, either because there has not been opened some influential truth, or because there has been no endeavour to give such a truth a hold on the affections.

Let not the opinion here expressed be mistaken for that of persons who, confounding metaphysical theories with prominent truths of Scripture, know of no evangelical preaching besides such as is seasoned with their theory. As there are some who thus pervert the expression from its proper signification, the greater is the pity, that occasion should be afforded to them thus to censure every thing not exactly squaring with the standard which they have devised.

Neither is it here wished to hold up the idea that a branch of Gospel morality may not be made, distinctly, the subject of a discourse. All contended for is, that instructions grounded on such subjects should be seen as comprehending Christian morals; that is, should be delineated in a Christian extent, and enforced on Christian motives. And indeed, there is no Christian grace in regard to which it may not be affirmed, that all useful effect depends on the regarding of the distinction here stated.



The defective preaching alluded to had no place in the Church of England, during the times intervening between the reformation and the restoration, nor even in the age in which the latter event took place. But one effect of the preceding troubles seems to have been, that the species of preaching made fashionable by them, being afterwards held in proportionate abomination and contempt, it was thought by some, that their distance from it could not be too great. Although it has been justly remarked, that enthusiasm and hypocrisy have a direct tendency to make infidels of those under whose notice they come; yet it may be doubted, whether the same effect be not produced in at least an equal degree, by the hearing of the Gospel imperfectly preached by those whose minds are evidently unaffected by its peculiar doctrines; and who give unequivocal proofs, that they discern no excellence in it, except such as it possesses in common with various productions of the human intellect.

There can be no doubt, that the fault here charged on some English preachers crossed the Atlantic; and that it has withheld the sincere milk of the word from the mouths to which it was due: and further, that this very thing has been no small hindrance in the way of the increase of our communion. Still the evil has been described with aggravation, by some, as was intimated before, because they substitute metaphysical theory for evangelical doctrine; and by others, because they suppose that everything must run aside of this, provided it be agreeable to the faculty of reason. But misconceptions and misrepresentations like these, cannot dispense with a duty which God has laid on the ministers of his

word, and to which they have consented at their ordination. Accordingly, the matter is here presented to the mind of the candidate, as entering essentially into the obligation which he is assuming.

After mention of a fault chargeable on some of the preachers of the parent Church, and from them insinuating itself into ours, it is with pleasure added concerning the former, that in the present day there seems much less of this mischievous leaven than formerly, so far as may be judged from the printed discourses of her bishops, and other distinguished characters among her clergy. It is to be wished, that their example may be influential on the clergy of this distant branch of the same communion; of whom we may affirm, that they hardly deserve the name of Christian, and probably are not so in their hearts, if they be indisposed to Christian preaching; and who, on the other hand, are destitute of other qualifications suited to their calling, if they cannot demonstrate by their doctrine, that revelation and reason may combine, in a union as natural as that so often witnessed between enthusiasm and nonsense.

This branch of the subject shall be concluded with two motives to the plan of preaching recommended. One is, that so far as can be judged from observation, it is that alone which carries conviction to the consciences of the hearers. The other is, that it is that alone which has the promise of being blessed to their salvation. Both these remarks apply immediately to the uses for which the ministry of the Gospel was instituted. The first brings here to mind a well known anecdote concerning a French bishop, [Massillon,] of whom it was said by his sovereign, that whereas he listened to some other preachers

with pleasure, he never heard the preacher here alluded to, without being displeased with himself. If the present papers should be ever read by any candidate who conceives of praises bestowed on ingenuity, or on eloquence, as comparable to a compliment like this ; on such a candidate the advice given at this time is probably thrown away. But if any candidate should perceive the declaration to be the most satisfactory that could have been made to a Christian preacher, he needs but peruse the discourses of the same bishop, to perceive, that the holy unction giving occasion to it, was transfused into them by the spirit of the peculiar doctrines of revelation ; and that without this, however otherwise eloquent and sensible, they would never have had the effect on the conscience of the monarch.

The other motive is alike important, when taken in connexion with the promises made in favour of the preached Gospel ; such as the assurance of its blessed Author's being with his ministers, in the office especially appointed to them, "even unto the end of the world." The promises imply, in addition to the internal excellency of divine truth, operating like the excellency with which some other writings may be clothed, an agency of the Divine Spirit, giving its efficacy towards the ends designed by it. Now, while it would be easy to find abundant evidence of the fulfilment of this promise, in the preaching of the truths of the Gospel, even where it is accompanied by no small portion of error ; yet, in regard to mere moral preaching, it would be difficult to find much fruit to the like effect, even where no error can be imputed. If then, as is expressed in the ordination service, the ministry was "ordained

for the salvation of mankind," here is the highest possible motive to the conducting of it in such a manner as alone can make it effectual to its end. There is related of a famous English prelate, [Archbishop Williams,] a fact which may perhaps set this matter in a strong point of view. The prelate alluded to possessed very splendid talents and acquirements. But although he made a figure in the world, it was in civil transactions, and not in those of the Church. Indeed, his whole life was so secular, and in some instances so incorrect, that, from all recorded of him, it would not have been natural to have inferred, that religion had made any impression on his conscience, were it not for a declaration made by him towards the close of his days. The declaration was, that could he know of any person brought to heaven by his instructions and persuasions, it would give him more satisfaction than he found resulting from all the labours of his active life. What a pity is it, that such a sentiment should have taken possession of a mind near the close of a ministry, rather than in the beginning of it. And what a pity would it also be, if such an impression, attendant on the beginning, should not be accompanied by a correct view of the means whereby alone the end can be accomplished!

The negative part of the question is—"And teach nothing as necessary to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scriptures?"

There can be no doubt that this was designed principally with a reference to traditions, and the decrees of councils; which, when the service was composed, had become elevated to a level with the

word of God. But the prohibition applies, with at least equal force, to doctrines of more modern origin; because antiquity, although it cannot sanction error, may palliate the reception of it, under the persuasion of its being true. And it applies with the most force to the suggestions of private opinion. For although the preacher, who delivers any thing of this sort as essential to salvation, will first persuade himself that it is proveable by Scripture; yet the consideration of the consequences of error; in this particular, may prove a considerable restraint on that vanity, which so often carries men in quest of something novel, merely that they may be distinguished.

On the subject now presented to the view, there arises the serious question,—What esteem and deference are due to the opinions of those who are called the fathers of the Church? Especially as we find from the writings of some of the very reformers by whom the present service was composed, that they laid no little stress on the documents which had been handed down from the first ages; although they drew so marked a line of difference between them and Scripture. It has been already intimated, that the ascertaining of the line of distinction intended by them ought to engage attention under the present question.

There seems no way of reconciling them to truth and to themselves in this particular, but by admitting; that while they considered Scripture as the standard, they thought that in the interpreting of this some light might be gathered from the opinions of the Christian Church in the times immediately subsequent to those of the apostles. Now the principle seems reasonable; on those rules of evidence which

carry conviction to all minds not under the bias of strong interfering prejudices. If the question had related to a system of legislation of high antiquity, it is not likely there would have been a dissentient, as to the sufficiency of this species of proof. And why it should be otherwise in regard to a religious economy, it is difficult to perceive. It has been said, that we have not only the same Scriptures, but the same helps to interpretation. This is true in a degree, but not entirely; because, whatever aids to criticism result from circumstances peculiar to the Gospel age, must have been more in the possession of the age succeeding than in our own. And this has the greater weight, on account of the very few works handed down to us, of the many which we know to have been written, between our Lord's ascension and the end of the second century. But were the allegation true in the extent intended, still there seems to be a help not duly considered in the quarter from which the allegation comes. The help alluded to is in facts attendant on the subject. The position may be illustrated in two instances; one of doctrine, and the other of discipline. Suppose a question raised concerning the pre-existence and the divine nature of our blessed Saviour; and the sentiments of the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles to be on the one side or on the other; taking into view the extent of Christendom, comprehending churches in places remote from, and having little connexion with one another. To conceive, on the one hand, that having been announced to the world as mere man, and this in a system which had for one of its leading objects the downfall of idolatry, he should, in the next age, and in so many various

places, and without contradiction, have divine attributes ascribed to him ; or, on the other hand, that having been announced as possessed of these, he should, in so short a space of time, be reduced to the grade of the first of prophets ; is so contrary, in either case, to the experience of the world, and to our ideas of human nature, that such an event would seem impossible. Accordingly, on finding the earliest accounts of the person of Christ to describe him as an object of adoration, there seems reason in considering this,—not indeed as creating a truth of Scripture,—but as confirming an interpretation of it, relatively to that very point. So, if there be moved the question of a subordination or a parity in the ministry ; when we perceive, in the second age of the Church, the former established throughout the world, and testified to have been so from the beginning ; testified, not in controversy, but as an undisputed fact ; and affirmed, not of particular places merely, but of all Christendom, in its disjointed state already noticed ; there seems ample evidence of the characteristick of our system, which requires three orders of the ministry ; still not as adding to Scripture, but as illustrating it. For the reason stated, and here applied to two subjects only, but admitting of application to many more, it should be recommended to every candidate, to pay a careful attention to the records of the first three centuries of the Church : at least of those of them which are principally illustrative of the faith and the discipline of their respective times. This is here recommended with a view to various theological notions of modern times ; for when it shall appear, concerning any of these, that, during the ages mentioned, they were not

known either in the character of truth or in that of error; there seems the highest evidence admitted of by the subject, that they cannot have had any place among the truths delivered to us in the Gospel.

Although in the weight here assigned to the opinions of the fathers, they have been contemplated as standing on the very ground on which they are placed by the institutions of our Church, yet it may be proper to notice an objection always brought against us by the Roman Catholicks. And it is noticed on the explanatory plan; because the sentiment involved in it has been sometimes brought forward by clergymen of the Church of England, inconsistently as would seem with a very leading principle of their communion. The objection is, that in the two points of infant baptism and the Christian Sabbath, we have no scriptural precept; that they rest on tradition only, and that, therefore, being acknowledged as well by Protestants as by Roman Catholicks, they are an evidence of the obligatory virtue of tradition.

Of infant baptism, how can it be said that there is no precept for it in the Scriptures? The command of our Saviour to his apostles is, to "make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The question then turns on this other; Who are in a state susceptible of discipleship? The answer as it concerns infants, is in that passage of the tenth chapter of St. Mark, which our Church has introduced into the baptismal service for infants. This renders it a matter of surprise, that any persons of the said Church should fall into the old Romish sentiment, of there



being no précept for the baptism of infants ; and if the argument needed further confirmation, it might be derived from the circumstances under which our Lord's baptismal command was given. It was addressed to persons familiarized to the Jewish economy, the initiatory rite of which was applicable to infants. There was now to be an initiatory rite of a new economy. In what sense then must the command have been understood by the persons to whom it was addressed ? Surely they could not have conceived, that under the Gospel, so much more liberal in all other respects than the dispensation which it succeeded, there was such a narrowing of the visible fold, as must be the result of the exclusion of infants from the privilege of being within its pale.

In regard to the Christian Sabbath, there is here conceded what the Romanists presume ; although under the recollection of its being a disputed point, that with the Jewish Sabbath there expired all the authority on which the observance of one day in seven rested. Accordingly, some new authority for the observance of the first day instead of the seventh, is to be looked out for. But such an authority is to be found. For the making out of this, it is to be recollected, that social worship is a duty independently on any appointment like that in question. But there must be a designation of some times, for the carrying of this duty into effect. If, therefore, it should appear, as well from the sacred Scriptures, as from the records of the Church illustrating them, that it was the habitual practice of Christians, taking place under apostolical direction, to meet on a particular day of the week in preference to the other days of it, for the discharge of the publick offices

of their religion ; this, taken in connexion with the independent nature of the duty attached to the offices themselves, carries with it the force of a command. For thus the subject becomes of a different nature from the subjects to which it has been compared ; such as our Saviour's washing of the feet of his disciples, and the sanctioning of the love-feasts of the early Christians by the apostles, neither of which is now held obligatory, because of the distinction between practice and command. These matters are in themselves of no force, and therefore require a command for the proving of the observance of them to be obligatory. But not so there being some appointed time, for the waiting on God in the instituted duties of religion. The very instituting of such duties calls for periodical times, and, therefore, the times designated by the practice of the proper authority become the appointed times. But that there was a solemnity attached by the apostles to the first day of the week is evident ; and its being entitled (Rev. i. 10,) " the Lord's day," is additional evidence of the fact. Also, in 1 Cor. xvi. 29, and in Acts xx. 7, the first day of the week is spoken of as the appointed weekly day of social worship.

On some of the preceding points, there has been given a very imperfect sketch of the grounds of the controversy between the Roman Catholicks and us. Imperfect, however, as it is, there may seem to have been more said than is consistent with the explanatory plan laid down. But there was seen a necessity of opening some of the views of the main point, on which our system rests ; in order to the determining of the degree of weight which, among ourselves, should be given to opinions extraneous to

Scripture. For we may apply to this case what St. Paul says of another in Gal. ii. 18, "If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." The application of this to our case is as follows: If we go back to the principles on which we have separated from the Church of Rome, the separation is thereby acknowledged to have been unwarrantable.

**QUESTION III.** "Will you then give your faithful diligence, always so to minister the doctrine, and sacraments; and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded; and as this Church hath received the same according to the commandments of God, so that you may teach the people committed to your care and charge, with all diligence, to keep and observe the same?"

The objects of the question come under three heads; that of doctrine; that of the sacraments; and that of discipline. Of each of these in their order.

Under the head of doctrine, the first inquiry occurring is, What right has a Church to define a standard of orthodoxy, to the rejection of those whose faith is otherwise? And is not this an assumption of power not warranted by the Gospel? The answer is, Whatever right a minister possesses in his individual capacity, the same may belong to the ministry, of which he is a member; and this, not with a greater, but in general a much less interference with individual opinion. If indeed it be presumed, that in every congregation, every minister happening to officiate among them has a right to require attention to what he holds to be divine truths;

and if it be unchristian in them to exclude any minister from officiating, because of errors supposed by them in his instructions; and further, if it be a violation of religious liberty for one minister to give discouragement to another, on these accounts, our system is fundamentally erroneous on the present point: but if the negative of these hypotheses, as is here expected, will be confessed by all, the question becomes reduced to a much narrower compass than before, and ought to respect, not the power itself, but the manner in which it is the most likely to be exercised with wisdom, and without the intermixture of personal enmity or rivalry. And here it might be supposed, but for evidence to the contrary, that there could be no room for difference of opinion.

Of the many controversies, the results of which depend on discerning the precise points whereon they respectively turn, perhaps there is no one in which the precise point has been more overlooked by one of the parties than on the present. When, to those who censure our Church in this particular, you state the inconvenience and the indecency of opposing doctrines, and opposing parties, within the same walls, you will find them constantly recurring, as conceiving it to be the only security of their peculiar system, to the discretion of the congregation; which, they think, will dictate the avoiding of the choice of a pastor hostile to it. Even this has been found among them insufficient for the purpose, where property was regarded. For there has been perceived the necessity of vesting it in trustees, in order to guard against the popularity of some future pastor, and the mutability of the flock. Is it not evident, in these two cases, of the former, that there was

lodged in the major vote of the congregation, and in the latter, that there lay with a few select members, the very power determining a standard of orthodoxy, which, with us, has been exercised in another way more likely, as we think, to be agreeable to truth, and promotive of "unity and peace?"

In opening what is to be understood by commanded doctrine, as interpreted by the reception of the Church, it may be sufficient to delineate some leading traits of what appears from her institutions, and especially from her articles, to be her sense of the system of the Gospel.

Not only general propriety, but the crisis in which she stood when the articles were framed, occasioned her being very decisive and particular in her protest against the errors of Popery. Her testimony, as to every particular connected with this subject, is too express to be mistaken.

It is equally so in regard to the Arian and Socinian errors, which existed even then, but have been propagated in our day with an extraordinary degree of zeal. As no Arian or Socinian can intrude into our ministry, without the practice of gross deception and prevarication, there needs not be any thing further said concerning them.

There are around us sundry communions of professing Christians; whose peculiar tenets are contradicted by our articles, with an explicitness not permitting mistake; and it is to be hoped, that no religious and virtuous members of such bodies will suppose us possessed of the less esteem for their persons, on account of the testimonies which we hold ourselves bound to bear against their opinions.

But there is another question meeting us, and oc-

casioning considerable diversity of sentiment. It is, whether, according to a distinction of names originating since the framing of the articles, they are Calvinistick or Arminian. The opinion here entertained is, that they are neither; but that there are discernible in them these three things: that on the first branch of the controversy, (predestination,) they are silent as to the point discriminating between the Calvinists and the Arminians; that on other points they fall short of the Calvinistick theory; and that on others they are opposed to it.

When it is said that, on the first branch of the controversy, the articles embrace both Calvinists and Arminians, the meaning is, that there is no decision on the question—Whether predestination be or be not founded on prescience? And yet this is a question which must have been before the compilers, as it had been resolved in the affirmative, by the fathers, both of the Greek Church and of the Latin, before the days of St. Augustin; and continued to be so in the former Church, even after the great ascendancy of this father had effected the negative of the question in the latter Church.

The points on which the articles are here thought to fall short of Calvinism, are, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ; the imputation of the sin of Adam; such a corruption of human nature as to impel to every species of crime, except so far as those are restraints indifferent to moral good and evil: and finally, irresistible grace. Not one of these things is declared in the articles.

And the points on which they are supposed to be opposed to Calvinism, are the universality of redemption, and the possibility of a fall from grace.

In relation to the first of these, the thirty-first article would seem to speak in terms too plain to be misunderstood, and a sense which is also supported by many explicit passages in the liturgy. The latter of the points is essentially involved, not only in positions of the article on baptism, but in the whole of the baptismal services. It is here supposed not to be alleged by the favourers of the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, that it is to be met with in the articles.

The opinion of the Calvinistick description of the articles, seems to have arisen from the tendency to Calvinism in the clergy of the Church of England, after the sanguinary reign of Mary. And yet it does not appear that, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the favourers of the system were so apt to plead the authority of the articles, as the example of what they thought the best reformed churches. This is certain, that what are called the Lambeth Articles, were drawn up to supply a supposed deficiency. And, accordingly, we find that persons dissatisfied with the establishment, were solicitous to have them incorporated with the other; in which, however, they were never gratified.

While there is thus delineated, though briefly, the sense of our Church on the points in the quinquatennial controversy, it is wished to be done with the forbearance which should be the result of the consideration, that many wise and good men have held the articles to be strictly Calvinistick. But what is here deemed intolerant in some persons of this description, is, their continually exhibiting of their opinions on the subject, as the doctrines of grace, while they refuse this character to the opinions of

those who differ from them. And further it is to be deeply lamented, that there should ever be a specious pretence afforded them by any of the clergy of our Church, in the not laying of sufficient stress, and the not insisting sufficiently often, on those of her doctrines by which the Gospel, as a dispensation of grace, is characterized. For the opening of what is here intended, there shall be referred to the five points severally, in order to show how far, under each of them, the glory of divine grace is interested.

On the first, although Scripture as well as revelation teaches, that "known to God are all his works, from the beginning of the world:" yet if, as the article decides, "we must receive the promises of God in such wise as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture;" the defining of a line between opposite errors on the subject, may be waved, as a mere matter of metaphysics. This is agreeable to the silence of the article, in relation to the principal difficulty of the controversy. And it is agreeable to Scripture also, if, as is conceived to be the case, the predestination of which it speaks, be of the collective body of a Church, and in reference to their state of covenant with God, in the present life.

Of universal redemption it is difficult to be perceived, either on the ground of the articles, or on that of the Scriptures, how it can be declared too explicitly; provided, as the article containing it exacts, it be ascribed wholly to "the offering of Christ once made," as "a perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world;" to the exclusion of all human deservings, as operating in the least degree to the forgiveness of sin.



As the effect of the fall, we are to acknowledge and teach constantly, that all right to immortality was lost in Adam; and that, by our descent from him, our understandings become darkened, and our wills depraved; or, as the ninth article speaks, "we are far gone from original righteousness;" so that, without the mercy of God through Christ, we are amenable to his justice for the punishment of sin in a future life, from which nothing in or of ourselves can rescue us.

Here intervenes the question of grace, as the word is used to denote divine assistance; to which source we must refer whatever may be holy and good within us, from the beginning of it to its consummation. And this is a sentiment which cannot encourage us to be inert, because, to the attainment of good, there must be the desire of it; which desire is itself the work of grace, independently on all questions concerning this principle, as to its being resistible or otherwise.

The subject of perseverance, according to the medium through which it is at present viewed, no further concerns us, than as it is to be kept continually before our minds, and made the great object of our endeavours; and as what, if ours, is ascribable only in respect to the praise of it, to the grace by the aid of which alone we can be kept through faith unto salvation.

These are doctrines which may be traced every where on the face of the New Testament; they are comprehensible by the most ordinary capacities; and they are immediately applicable to practice. But, alas! there have been engrafted on them many metaphysical subtleties, which the mass of mankind

will never be able to understand; which no man is obliged to endeavor to understand; and which, generally, are the least understood by those whose faculties are devoted to them. Yet let not the minister of the Gospel, while he looks with contempt on the hay and the stubble, undervalue the foundation, which alone can sustain the superstructure of "gold, silver, and precious stones," to be brought together and built up by his ministry. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And if, for this foundation he substitute that of the sufficiency of human reason and human virtue, the issue will not be either profitable to the Church, or satisfactory to himself.

To proceed to the subject of the sacraments. The senses in which our Church has received them, so far as concerns her departure from the Romanists, is so clearly set forth in the twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, and twenty-eighth articles, that nothing needs be here said in that respect. Those articles bear ample testimony against transubstantiation, the introduction of five sacraments, unknown as such to antiquity, and some matters connected with the same unauthorized doctrines. But among Protestants, and especially in modern times, there have been introduced opinions not at all consistent with the articles of the Church referred to.

It is necessary only to read what is said of baptism under the twenty-seventh article, and what is included concerning it under the more general terms of the twenty-fifth, to perceive, that our Church considers this ordinance as an actual grafting into the Church, without any such distinction as the one invented, between a visible and an invisible

society under that name. The same had been uniformly taught in the primitive Church, long before the introduction of the errors of Popery; which, enormous as they were, left this matter untouched. It was so blended with the system of St. Austin, that the early Churches of the reformation, who held the writings of this father in great esteem, could not overlook the circumstance, that it was there retained, although perhaps not in perfect consistency with some of his favourite doctrines. Calvin affirms it, in terms equally explicit with those of Austin. Even the creeds of some Calvinistick Churches of the present day contain expressions which must have originated in the same principles. How this is reconciled with the general sentiment of the members, it is not easy to perceive. For the ministers and others of these Churches consider baptism merely as an introduction to the visible Church, without any such effect as our articles have defined. Neither is this confined to Calvinistick communions; for there are some of an anti-calvinistick description, who hold and teach directly contrary to us in this particular. It seems inconsistent in any person who thinks with them, to declare his belief in our articles. For not only are they explicit in themselves, but if they needed a comment, there is an ample one running through the baptismal offices. The same is obvious in some of our prayers, in the other parts of the Liturgy; and it is further declared in the Catechism, in which the person examined is affirmed to have been made, in baptism, "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." In addition to Scripture, the uniform language of the Christian Church on this sub-

ject is a disproof of some doctrines, of which it may be perceived, on historick grounds, that they were superinduced on the Christian faith, at no very early period of time. The inferring from this circumstance of a caution against the unsoundness of such doctrine, is one of the uses here proposed, in the opening of the present particular of the system.

Concerning the Lord's supper, it is intended to guard against two opposite extremes.

On the one hand, there has been frequently remarked, that some divines, treating of this holy ordinance, make it little more than a man's celebrating of the memory of a deceased friend, from whom he had derived considerable benefit. That there has been ground of complaint in this respect, is here clearly conceived : but with a suspicion, that there is frequently a mistake in the application of the censure, and that the error in view lies deeper than the censure reaches. As our Lord's command was simply, "Do this in remembrance of me;" it seems as if no more were necessary on the part of the receiver, than the act of commemoration, provided there be adequate apprehensions of the commemorated subject ; that is, of the death of Christ, not merely as for human benefit, for so were the deaths of St. Peter and St. Paul, but as a propitiatory sacrifice, the antitype of that paschal sacrifice, at the close of which the eucharist was instituted. In this point of view, the bread and the wine are memorials of the body and the blood of Christ, as a sacrifice for sin. And the consuming of the memorials, is a participation of the benefits of the sacrifice. When these things are kept out of view, there seems an inaccuracy in ascribing imperfection to the mere

commemorating ; the imperfection wholly lying in low ideas of the commemorated subject. The effect of this sentiment should be, not the countenancing of representations below the dignity of the eucharist, but the applying of the idea of dignity to the proper point.

For there are some who, to avoid the extreme stated, have gone into its opposite ; that of affirming a proper sacrifice in the eucharist. If the deception concerning this were unconnected with other questions, the definitions of sacrifice have been so numerous, that it might perhaps be resolved into a strife of words, although in the scriptural sense of sacrifice, except when used metaphorically, slaying was an essential circumstance. But to the idea of a sacrifice in the eucharist, there is attached that of an altar, and that of priest, in the Jewish sense of the terms, which is unauthorized either by Scripture or by our Church, or rather in violation of the authority of both.

The word "priest," has been spoken of in another place ; and concerning "altar," there is to be remarked, that it is never used in Scripture, as applicable to the place of depositing the elements ; "table," being the word. Heb. xiii. 10, has been quoted to the opposite purpose ; but independently on the metaphorical style of that book of Scripture, the text is differently interpreted by the best writers of our Church, among whom is Dr. Hammond. The history of changing altars for tables by our reformers, in the reign of Edward VI., is well known ; and although at a latter period endeavours were used to restore what they had done away, it was one of the many improprieties which produced effects

very disastrous, and which were frustrated in the end ; so that our Church remains in this particular, as she had been left by such men as Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer.

If the communion service be examined, it is easy to perceive places in which the eucharist itself might have been called a sacrifice, had any such thing been thought desirable ; but in no such manner is the term applied. In the prayer of consecration, our prayers and thanksgivings are called a sacrifice ; and we offer ourselves as "a living sacrifice." But these are evidently in the same latitude of sense in which our alms are so called in Scripture. As to there being a sacrifice in the elements, or a sacrificing in offering them, nothing like it is to be found.

That some pious and learned men of the Church of England, being sincere Protestants also, have entertained a wish to bring her back, in the premises, to what she has relinquished, appears too plainly in their writings. However great their names, we may presume so far to differ from them, as to think that there may be discerned the germ of some of the worst of the errors of the Church of Rome, in the sentiments which they have expressed. On this ground, and supported by the unquestionably declared sense of our Church, it is proper to caution the candidate against exploded opinions, in which, if they should ever gain considerable ground in our branch of the Protestant Church, there may be clearly discerned an opening to contention and disunion.

There remains to speak of discipline ; and the most obvious circumstance in the shape in which our Church receives it, is the Episcopacy.

In establishing the superiority of the Episcopal order, there has been some variety in the arguments of eminent men. There is no occasion to ascertain the merits of their several pleas. But it is to the purpose to remark, that the most moderate principles on which the candidate can estimate his relation to his bishop, requires submission to the canonical exercise of authority. For if the presbyter is rightly to minister the discipline committed to himself, he is of course to be submissive to that under which he is. But what is needful on this subject, has been said under a question omitted here; because handled in the treating of the service for deacons. It is more important therefore to remark, that the ministering of the discipline requires of the presbyter the sustaining of the Episcopal system in his ministrations. There have been some ministers of our communion who, from affectation of liberality, have encouraged under their superintendence, ministerial doings, implying an entire disregard of Episcopal sanction. Even in regard to the professed charity of such a practice, it is in appearance only; because charity will always be best manifested in forbearance towards those who differ from us: and in thinking well of their motives, and of their persons, so far as circumstances may warrant, rather than in sacrificing our principles to theirs. But be this as it may, where such license is intended, to make the promise is prevarication; and where resolved on afterwards, is a breach of promise.

The subject exacts a few remarks concerning discipline, as it respects, first, the clergy; and secondly, the laity.

As it respects the clergy, the promise requires of

him who makes it, that he shall so far faithfully discharge his share of discipline, as to perform what it enjoins on him, for the censuring and the removing of disorderly brethren in the ministry. It is not meant, that he should make himself an inquisitor; nor, without knowledge of a just cause, an accuser; nor yet, that he should concur in any such arbitrary measures, as, being adopted without evidence, and even without regard to fair methods of proceeding, would tend to leave to no man security for interest or for reputation. But it is necessary to the conscientious discharge of the obligation here assumed, that the party feel a deep interest in the cause of Christianity in general, and of this Church in particular—that, with a view to these objects, and without personal malice, he concur in all orderly and temperate measures, for the clearing of his communion from any existing scandal—that if called on to judge and to determine in any case, he have a due sense of the interests of religion, although not such a mistaken idea of them, as to imagine them to be served by excessive severity, much less by tyranny or injustice—in short, that the principles confessedly applicable to men in authority in the concerns of the state, and to which they are tied by the solemnity of oaths, be considered by him as binding in this case, without an oath, in the civil sense of the word; yet by a promise, made under circumstances at least as solemn as those accompanying an oath. For this must surely be seen to attach to the answer to be made at the Christian altar, to the question now before us; which must be seen to have little meaning, if it do not oblige a clergyman to vindicate the purity of his professional character; so that, if it be vio-



lated by a depraved brother, there may be a concurrence with respectable brethren, in their measures for "putting away from among them that wicked person." Where a minister is grossly negligent of the duty here stated, it would be rash to say, that it may not be owing to lenity of temper, carried to a criminal extreme; but there would seem required considerable evidence of his zeal for religion in some other way, to justify so favourable an interpretation as that supposed; and to shield him from the charge of being equally indifferent to his profession, and to the religion which it was given to sustain and propagate.

As discipline respects the laity, there ought to be remembered the limited sphere within which our canons have extended it: and it is not here designed to uphold to a candidate the idea of his so stretching of his authority beyond the canons, as, if permitted, would be a precedent for the making of a tyrant of every minister of a parish. There ought, however, to be declared the opinion, that if ecclesiastical discipline were maintained among us in its perfection, open and proved immorality would be followed by an exclusion from a membership of our communion. How moderate would be an authority exerted to this effect, compared with that assumed by other religious communities; which, in some instances, extends to an inquisition into the movements of the minds of men; and, in others, excludes for causes not contrary either to reason or to Christian precept! For the present, however, there does not open the prospect of such a reasonable extent of discipline, as is here advocated: so that in the promise here exacted by the Church, there is enjoined nothing further than

the limited discipline, which respects exclusion from the eucharist for just cause, and on account of scandal. To this the candidate certainly binds himself by the promise.

Before leaving the question, there will be propriety in noticing these words in it—"So that you may teach the people committed to your care and charge, with all diligence to keep and observe the same?" It applies to all that went before, to doctrine, and to the sacraments, as well as to discipline. The duty in question is bound on the conscience of the minister, by its intrinsic importance, and by his voluntary promise. But its end is the sustaining of the importance of the matters specified, not in his own estimation and practice only, but also in the body under his charge. If the pastor be lax in the administration of ecclesiastical discipline, he can hardly blame even a greater degree of laxity among his parishioners; and, particularly, in points in which his individual interests may be concerned. There is the greater reason to notice this, because of the readiness of those prone to violate institutions, to make loud complaints, when any are violated to their own disadvantage. But such ought to be aware, that if they set the example of an emancipation from discipline, it is in the ecclesiastical line as in the civil, that the leaders in such license are not the competent judges, as to the lengths to which it may be extended.

QUESTION IV.—"Will you be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God's word; and to use both publick and private

monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole within your cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given ?”

Before the discussion of any particular here occurring, there may be propriety in ascertaining the precise senses of the terms.

“Faithful diligence” is exacted, and continual readiness for the exercise of it. The matter against which it is to be exercised are, “all erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God’s word.” They are to be “driven away”—so far as ministerial vigilance and activity can produce such an effect—“from the Church.” These words are not in the English service ; but were inserted in the American, in order to avoid the harsh appearance of a sanction of civil proceedings relative to error in religion. Not that this could have been designed in the Church of England, which knows of no power to that effect in parochial ministers. It was, however, prudent to guard against all danger of our being charged on this account. In driving away error from the Church, “both publick and private monition are to be used ;” and they are to be addressed “as well to the sick as to the whole.” This does not seem to designate the sick and the healthy, in the common acceptation of the words ; for however applicable to them, as to others ; the specifying of them in this place would mar the unity of design ; and thus weaken the force of the matter principally to be enjoined. What is added, “as need shall require, and occasion shall be given,” is a reasonable qualification of the duty ; and shows, that discretion is to be called in for the judging of the probability of usefulness.

There seems to have been especial care bestowed, in the choice of the expressions in this question. In the preceding, there had been exacted faithful diligence in the ministrations, in which the pastor, under all possible circumstances of personal ability, is supposed to be employed; but here, mention is indeed made of the same faithful diligence, yet he is required to be ready to exert it as circumstances may require. Although this presumes the possibility of his being stationed where error does not show its head to the disturbance of the Church; yet there is exacted a willing mind to be prepared for the suppression of it, if such an exigency should occur. Here it is of importance to remark, that if the minister is to have a ready mind, to the effect stated, this presumes him furnished with the necessary acquirements for the purpose; so that without possessing them in a competent measure, it would be rash to bind himself by the promise. Some entertain the opinion, that besides piety and a good life, nothing further is necessary to qualify for the pastoral charge, than what they call a gift for preaching; by which word they understand little more than a talent for speaking volubly on the usual subjects of popular edification. Now let there be this endowment in ever so great a degree; and let it be exerted with ever so little disfigurement of the weakness which is often concealed or made acceptable by it; we cannot but perceive, that there may be a possession of the talent, attended by a glaring deficiency of the information requisite to combat fundamental error, in the various shapes which it may assume.

Under the idea of banishing and driving away error from the Church, there seems especial refer-

ence to such error as is brought forward to the disturbance of its peace ; so that the promise does not oblige to an inquisition into the private opinions of men's minds. It is true that, independently on this promise, a minister should always be ready in the case of material error on the mind of any individual, however sincerely entertained, and however modestly expressed, to point out its contrariety to the Gospel ; and the dangerous, although perhaps unintended consequences to which it leads. This is a bounden duty ; but it is not the object of the question, which supposes something obtruding itself on the social body, so as to disturb, or threaten to disturb its peace.

Under the expressions " erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God's word," there can be no doubt that the Church comprehends all those against which she has borne her testimony in her articles ; and so far at least the promise must be seen to bind. It cannot be denied that time has brought forth others, not contemplated in the framing of the articles ; and although the promise must be acknowledged to include them also, yet there is danger of erring through indiscreet zeal on one hand, or criminal remissness on the other. It is not every shade of difference in opinion that will warrant the minister to throw on it the odium of material error ; and the danger of confounding the two is an additional reason for requiring a sufficiency of intellectual information as a qualification for the ministry ; because this cannot fail to operate as a counterpoise to pride and passion, in their tendency to intolerance ; not indeed eradicating those principles where they have taken possession of the heart, but restraining them from the

excesses which are the result of ignorance. But, as was intimated, there is the other extreme of indifference to upstart errors ; and this will in vain look for justification to the silence of the Church, which, having exhibited a connected chain of Christian doctrines, has a right to presume, what is indeed a fact, that there can arise no novelty which will not be found a contradiction of some truth affirmed by her.

The question goes on—"and use both publick and private monitions and exhortations." The publick monitions and exhortations are evidently the exercises of the pulpit. It is evident that the Church expects of her ministers occasional remonstrances against prevailing error ; and therefore, however true the position that sermons should be directed to the amending of the heart, and the reforming of the life ; and although this end may reasonably be thought defeated by the bestowing of too great a proportion of preaching on speculative subjects ; yet it should be understood with a due regard to the sanctions by which alone evangelical morality is sustained. The garden of Gospel morals may be acknowledged the especial subject of cultivation ; the fence, however, is not to be neglected by the gardener, however blameable he would be in making it the principal object of his attention. The matter now treated of is a proof of what results from many other sources also—the importance of a minister's adapting of his discourses to the present state of his congregation. And particularly it reminds him, that if there be danger of the extreme of dwelling too often and too long on subjects which give much scope to litigation, how much more will he err, if, as to the subjects

dwelt on; his congregation are little if at all in danger of being led astray. This, however, ought not to make him inattentive to the consideration, that if there be the prevalence of any particular error, he is in some degree chargeable if he do not bear his testimony against it. And although there is no impropriety in doing this by discourses addressed particularly to the evil; yet a judicious preacher may accomplish the same end, and perhaps more effectually, by contriving occasionally that monition and exhortation shall grow out of some branch of an argument, apparently framed independently on such design.

There are contemplated not only publick but also private monition and exhortation; the most difficult of all the duties here enjoined by the Church, and to be taken on the conscience: especially as the end of it, being not the exercise of ministerial superiority, but the good of the person admonished or exhorted, if either his proud passions would evidently render him the worse for his being the subject of such an exercise, or if the minister be conscious of the want of a weight of character in himself, to render his interference any other than a matter of contempt; there would seem no use, but, on the contrary, great disuse in the office in contemplation. The latter of these suppositions is among the many considerations which should induce a minister to aim at such a purity of character as must render his instructions and even his presence, a rebuke of any thing contrary to good morals. And it should, besides, move him to such vigilance over his own heart, as that any verbal rebuke, if given, shall not be attributable to vanity, or to the idea of a wounding of his personal

dignity on the occasion. In short, on this delicate subject there are to be taken into the account many considerations, arising out of the personal characters of ministers and of people. And besides these, there are to be taken into view other considerations, accommodated to time and to place. The conscientious minister must judge under an alternate danger; on one hand, of throwing pearls before swine, or of exhibiting himself as not knowing what manner of spirit he is of; and on the other hand, of a criminal indifference, which would be not only a breach of the present promise, but endanger the bringing of his ministry and, deservedly, his person into contempt. It shall only be added, that the least exacted of him in this respect, is his manifesting not resentment, but disapprobation and grief, when religion and morals are offended in his presence. If he have no sensibility on such occasions, he is a stranger to the spirit of the Gospel ministry; and if such occasions occur often, without his evidencing a sense of impropriety in the offenders, he may be assured that his real character is not a secret to the world.

The monitions and exhortations are to be given, "as well to the sick as to the whole." It has been intimated already, that these expressions should be construed with a reference to the subject of error; and explained to denote the being under its influence, or the contrary. This meaning best harmonizes with the prominent design of the question. If the interpretation be correct, the sentiment is, that the minister, not contenting himself with inculcating sound doctrine on the minds of the people generally, is to make it an especial object to extend the same to those who are the most in danger of perversion.



But if any one should suppose that bodily health and sickness are the matters intended, the sense will still be good : amounting to this, that the admonition and the exhortation, fitly addressed in time of health, are especially seasonable in time of sickness ; at which time there is an extraordinary use in ministerial aid. And yet we may doubt of its being the matter provided for in this particular place ; the more so, because the sick are held out as prominently the objects of attention. This indeed they are in respect to consolation, and in some cases information ; but not in respect to admonition and exhortation.

There was remarked of the last clause, that it calls for theological knowledge : but by the remaining clause there is called for, perhaps as much as by any thing in the system, a quality of another nature—that of Christian prudence. A minister is to use his best diligence to prevent the spreading of error among his flock. But is it by inquisitorial process, and by interferences on slight grounds, known in all ages to have increased the evils which they were designed to remedy ? Not at all : It is “as need shall require and occasion shall be given.” Here, then, as was remarked, is a loud call for Christian prudence ; for it often happens, and even as the effect of an honest and inquiring mind, that doubts and difficulties occur, where there is no unworthy passion inducing a bias to sectarian error : doubts, which are easily removed by free and friendly conversation, and even by the parties’ more mature consideration ; while the hastily treating of it as heresy or schism would be the likeliest mean, such is the infirmity of human nature, of inducing these extremes. We may lament, that seeing there is in

the world so much sectarian zeal, impelling to unwearied endeavours to make converts to senseless systems; ministers should have much reason to complain—as indeed they have—of those who are occasionally seduced from our communion, without giving opportunities of freely discussing the causes of contemplated separation. Here is an additional motive to the exercise of the discretion recommended. But much more, it is a motive to all the virtues of the Christian character; the want of any one of them operating as some discouragement of such disclosures as have been represented to be desirable. But if a minister possesses any trait of character evidently opposed to Gospel morals; and even if, in connexion with decency of deportment, he be marked by a worldly spirit, and manifest no considerable interest in the defence and the propagation of religious truth; he is not likely to be had recourse to, in any such seasons of difficulty as those supposed.

QUESTION V. “Will you be diligent in prayers, and in reading the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh?”

The first matter here mentioned, is diligence in prayers. Of the sense of this solemn interrogatory, there needs be no exposition. And of the importance of the subject, there needs be no demonstration to any person whose mind is seasoned by the most elementary precepts of our holy religion. But there may be pertinency in remarking, as a circumstance which ought to be very important with every candidate for the ministry, that God and his own conscience, and none besides, are judges of the sincerity

with which he binds himself to a duty so sacred, and at the same time so retired. The remark is confined to his sincerity in making the promise, and is not extended to the fidelity of his performance. In this there are other judges besides his conscience and his God. The world in general will be his judge. For although they do not follow him to his closet, or look into his heart, yet his conduct will testify to them the degree of influence of the promise over the exercises of both. What is meant is, that if the person thus pledging himself to have his thoughts and his desires in heaven, should have them fixed on this transitory world, much beyond what is necessary for the fulfilment of its duties; and especially if he should show himself in any way under the guidance of wicked passion; he proclaims more unequivocally than can be done in words, "I have been unfaithful to my promise, made before God and his Church at my ordination."

Diligence is required, as in prayers, so also in reading the holy Scriptures. The prominent place here given to the latter subject, has tended much to confirm an opinion here received, from a consideration of Christian subjects generally, of an erroneous—and that perhaps the common—method of directing the study of divinity, which is to put into the hands of the student, the systematick treatises of this description, without exacting a previous and careful study of the sacred text. In this there is no design of condemning systematick study in the gross; as some in the other extreme have done. Not but that the substantial parts, even of systems, may be gathered from the writings of those who have bestowed their labours on explanations of the Scrip-

tures. Still, as they who are young in ecclesiastical studies, are in some danger of hastily taking up opinions not conformable with one another; very often considering an opinion in its distinct merits as they appear on a particular view of it, and not aware of the relation which yet it may bear to some other; there may be a use in such writings as helps, so to speak, to systematize the student's own mind. Still the substratum, the applying of all the parts of which to their proper uses, ought to be the end aimed at in all human reasonings, are the holy Scriptures. Without habitual perusal of them, it is impossible that the minister of Christ should be prepared for those exigencies which will doubtless occasionally occur, of defending some parts of them against the objections and the scoffs of infidels, or of explaining other parts against the perversion of them to very dangerous errors. For the former it is somewhat easier to be prepared, because of that blind credulity to which nothing is equal in any other line, wherewith infidel writers hand down, from age to age, the same stale objections, and which modern unbelievers pick up, without a knowledge of the able and satisfactory replies. But in the latter line, it is impossible to foresee the various misconceptions by which detached passages of Scripture are perverted to the support of whimsical fancies taken up in haste. It would be very injurious to the sacred oracles to suppose, that this is an evil peculiarly attached to them. It belongs to the expressing of any subject in human language. At the same time there is discernible in Scripture, a clearness of diction in regard to whatever enters essentially into the faith or the practice of a Christian. But when people

overlook truths so luminous, and become ingenious in selecting what they understand the least, there may be weakness in this, but there is a mixture of perverseness also. Still, the minister of the Gospel meets it often; and if he have not studied his Bible with sufficient care; and if, in addition to this, he have not been in the habit of refreshing his memory by recurring to the connexion and other explanatory circumstances; he may find himself often confounded by ignorant and weak persons, with the furniture of a more diligent reading of the Bible, especially if this be aided by a retentive memory and a volubility of tongue. But there is a more serious reason still, for great readiness in the Scriptures. A clergyman will occasionally have to address a person in a state of mind, rendering an application of the consolations of the divine word peculiarly important; and in doing this, he will have to counteract misrepresentations of other parts of it, leading to deep distress. Of persons of this sort, sometimes in health, and sometimes in sickness, instances will occur often: and they will come unexpectedly; and are no otherwise to be provided for than habitually. It is to be hoped, that there can be no need to demonstrate how miserable is the insufficiency of a minister of the Gospel, unprovided on such occasions, with what must be confessed among the most precious of the fruits of a diligent study of the holy Scriptures. Surely we may say of this in regard to him, as of charity in regard to men in general, that without it, "if he have all mysteries and all [other] knowledge, it profiteth nothing."

But the candidate promises, that he will "give his faithful diligence," as "in reading the Holy

Scriptures," so likewise "in such studies as help to a knowledge of the same."

Here the Church decides explicitly on the question—Whether there be studies extraneous to the Scriptures, yet helping to the knowledge of them? There has been already noticed, that, to an inquiring mind, Scripture is itself, and without foreign aid, sufficient for whatever enters essentially into faith and practice. But this is to be understood, under the supposition of so much modesty as will be content with want of information, where God has not bestowed an opportunity of acquiring it. Nevertheless, the more full opening of the Scriptures is one of the uses for which the ministry was ordained.

There is recollected the delicacy of the point now brought into view, how far the prospect of usefulness may be a reason for dispensing, in some cases, with branches of learning held to be generally important. This question has been much discussed among us, in another line; and it is not intended to counteract the moderation which has governed in the public counsels of the Church. But it is wished to state strongly, the distinctions between the dispensing with literature and the denying of its importance. The latter stands opposed to all correct apprehensions of the nature of the Gospel ministry.

On every subject there should be a consistency of theory and of conduct. There are societies of professing Christians, who hold and zealously defend the tenet, that to the discharge of the ministerial commission, there can be required nothing that is dependent on study, or on any other application of the human intellect. Whether among such societies there are ever admitted to authorized instruction,

persons who cannot read the Bible, is a point on which no information is here possessed. On the ground of their professed principles, it does not appear how such a person, otherwise approved of, could be refused. All this, though erroneous, is consistent. But in the persons now in view, who contend that no literature besides that of reading the Bible should be required, there is manifest inconsistency in supposing that even this is necessary, since it is an attainment requiring the intervention of human art. If such inconsistent reasoners should be brought so far as to concede, that besides the bare reading, the understanding of the Bible may be made a requisite, there is desired no further concession, as the foundation of the following statement of what may be supposed to have been understood by the Church, under the terms, "such studies as help to a knowledge of the same."

In the first place it must be presumed, that a knowledge of the languages in which the Scriptures were given must have been considered by her as of no small importance. Be it so, that the knowledge of them is not necessary in every case; yet what would be the condition of the Christian Church, if its ministry were ignorant of them altogether? And would not Christianity be taken by tradition, as much, and indeed more, than in the darkest times of the middle ages? Some divines have pronounced, and among them is no less a man than Calvin—that, in the minds of godly persons, there is a witness to true Scripture, distinguishing it from the false. But those divines proceed on the supposition, that the Scriptures are faithfully translated; and none of them go so far as to affirm the same inward test of the fidelity of the translation. Even this, indeed, has been professed

in the societies before alluded to ; but, although instances have been affirmed as facts, it is not here imagined that the matter has been put to the test of a fair experiment, which might easily be done. But to bring these remarks to their proper point ; if it be acknowledged that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament were delivered in the Hebrew and the Greek languages ; and that the translations of them are guides no further than as they agree with the originals ; it must needs be of essential importance that there should be some persons qualified to judge of the correspondency. And if there must absolutely be some so qualified, the more general the qualification the better ; especially as there must frequently occur occasions of controversy concerning doctrine ; when, for elucidation, recourse must be had to a comparing of the translation with the original.

In regard to the Hebrew language, there may be propriety in making the acknowledgment, that there seems weight in the remark of its being rendered less necessary than it would otherwise have been, by the translation of the seventy ; which may be depended on as substantially correct, since it was used in our Saviour's time generally, by the Jews in the Grecian countries ; and since some of the quotations in the New Testament, of passages from the Old, agree more exactly with the Septuagint than with the original Hebrew. The latter, however, will be often found of great importance, and ought to be recommended ; and indeed more strongly required, when opportunities shall more generally be found of acquiring it. Still, that it may be easier dispensed



with than if there had not existed the said aid of the Septuagint translation, is here conceded.

Of the Greek language there can be no need to say much. It must be self-evident, that if any language besides the vernacular is necessary to a clergyman, it must be that in which there are recorded the life and death of the Redeemer; and as well his own blessed instructions as those of his apostles.

There are few, perhaps none, who enter on the foregoing languages, without being first acquainted, in some measure, with the Latin. If any, however, should plead for the dispensing with this, because not one of the vehicles of divine truth, there cannot be alleged in its favour an equal importance with that of the other two. Yet it is of considerable importance; for if, as is certainly the case, the history and the very ancient monuments of the early Church, by exhibiting its faith, reflect light on questions arising concerning the sense of Scripture; this is a consideration which gives great importance to the language in which the said documents are conveyed to us, so far as regards one of the great branches into which the Christian Church became nominally divided before the separation of communion, which at last took place and became final.

Concerning all the languages here noted, it is a stale pretence that Christianity was at first propagated by unlettered men. This is true; but, for the exigency of the then existing circumstances, were they not furnished with the gift of tongues? Were they not possessed of miraculous gifts of various kinds? These extraordinary helps have confessedly ceased; and the Scriptures have been transmitted to us by their divine Author, under such circum-

stances, that without helps of another nature they would be a sealed book. How inapplicable the premises! How weak the conclusion!

Besides these languages, without which, possessed by some, we should be as much strangers to the Gospel as the inhabitants of Japan or China, even when it is opened to us in our own language, it is so much connected with civil history, that without this, in connection with ancient customs, we want much light otherwise to be obtained, for the explaining of passages very difficult without it, and for the removing of objections, of which the enemies of our holy religion are always ready to avail themselves. There shall be mentioned a striking instance. When the present writer was a youth, there was no topick of infidelity so much insisted on, as the inconsistency of sacred history with that of the Chinese and of the Eastern India. To this it was reasonably answered, that the intercourse of the Europeans with the inhabitants of those countries was so recent and so partial, as to be inadequate to the obtaining of documents commensurate with the positions made. Of late years the delusion has vanished: principally in consequence of the labours of the late Sir William Jones, and others acting in connexion with him. That great man, who is said to have gone to India a skeptic, became there fully convinced of the truth of sacred history, from the consenting evidences which he found of the deluge; of the dispersion; of the prominent facts in sacred story; and of the epochs to which they are referred. It would be irrelevant to the present subject to remark, as some might be disposed to do, that the matters mentioned will not avail to the renovation of the heart. They are not

mentioned as applying to such a purpose. But in proportion to the importance of this holy operation, is that of sustaining the credibility of the Christian-system; which must be given up, if it will not bear a rational investigation on the best established principles of evidence. And by whom is it to be defended on such grounds, if, in this point of view, it is to be abandoned by the clergy?

Perhaps there is no branch of literature, the speculations of which have so much mixed themselves with theology, as those of metaphysics. But while their use in their proper place is confessed; and while the divine is advised to avail himself of it, in such a manner as to guard against the abuse; yet there is none greater, than that which has been the result of its laying its unhallowed hands on the simplicity of Christ's religion. The science, however, cannot be without its use, as it respects the investigation either of those properties of the Divine Being, which shows a foundation of theology in nature; or those powers of man, which constitute him a subject of moral discipline. But in the ages prior to the Christian, there had been among philosophers a monstrous excess of metaphysical refinement, to which there was the greater temptation, as fallacy could so easily shelter herself under the difficulty of detection. Nothing is more evident on the face of Scripture, than its being unsophisticated by this science. And the same may be said of the religion professed during the first two centuries, and with some exceptions in the third. But in the fourth, the inroads of metaphysics on the territory of Christian theology became conspicuous. It seems to have happened thus: When philosophers became converted in con-

siderable numbers to Christianity, it was natural for them to retain a bias to their former systems, in such points as they thought not inconsistent with the faith; and hence to imagine, that in this they saw some countenance to the opinions of the other. The first mischiefs of this stranger, were in the Trinitarian controversy. Afterwards she put her meddling finger on the questions of predestination and grace. And in the latter, her subtle theories became swelled into dogmas, which press with their whole weight on the Christian Church to the present day. So fertile is the human imagination, when let loose into this airy field, that it is not uncommon to find books written for the influencing of the faith of ordinary Christians, in which the distinctions are so many and so minute, that if they be correct, it would seem as though there were no faculty of man having so much to do in the concern of his salvation as his memory. The amount of what has been said, is the opinion to be here expressed, that the requisite attention to metaphysicks, of a clergyman, as such, does not extend beyond its most demonstrable truths; and that, if he go further in them, it should be for the purpose, not of bringing aid to Christianity, but to rescue it from an unnatural association.

Concerning physicks or natural knowledge, and its attendant helps, there may be remarked, that besides their tendency to strengthen the reasoning faculty, and to enlarge our views, some information in this line is called for, with a view to the defence of the Christian fortress against those by whom it is assailed, with the misapplied weapons of human literature. The remark might be illustrated in various instances: but there shall be given one instance only,

and that in a modern infidel, whose work has been the more noticed in this country, because of his having been here himself.

The writer, [Volney,] in a work well calculated to dazzle the imagination, has described all religion, whether natural or revealed, as growing out of the astronomical observations of the ancient Egyptian priests, by them expressed in hieroglyphick characters and fables; which, in time, became misunderstood and misinterpreted. Nothing can be more futile, than the evidence on which he grounds this; referring to the pretended monuments of it, in his notes, which do not sustain the things affirmed. But any Sciolist can pick up the assertions, without troubling himself with the notes, and thus assail the faith of ordinary Christians. Very inconsistently, indeed, will these act, if the well attested records of Christianity are outweighed in their estimation, by every random hypothesis. Still the poison is at hand; and by whom is the antidote to be administered, if it be beyond the sphere of those who are the commissioned deputies of the great Physician of souls?

Of the science of natural morality there shall be said but little; because there can hardly be overlooked, that it co-operates with Christian morals in accomplishing the same great end. These rest on the command of God himself; not to be questioned by our reason, or bounded by our discretion: that traces duty to its sources in the nature of man, and in the will of God discoverable by nature. There may be propriety in guarding against an error; and if the mention of it should be thought not exacted by the nature of this address, the importance of the

matter may be an excuse. The error is the taking for granted, as is done by many, that the moral law contemplated in nature, is what the human mind, by its own energy, and under all circumstances, ascertains. Nothing can be more contrary to fact; as is evident in the gross conceptions of the subject, by which, in all ages, whole nations have been degraded. It must, indeed, be conceded, and is confirmed by what St. Paul says in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, that, independently on revelation, there is a law agreeable to the light of nature, and rendering the conscience of a man a law to himself. But however his mind may—not must—reason correctly on data when given to him on the present subject; it has always been a problem, how far such data, with the wisest of the Heathen, were the remains of an original revelation; and whether without this their minds would not have stopped at as low a point in the scale of sacred truth, as those of the Eastern and of the Western Indians? But be this as it may, there might be easily proved, that the moral theories of the wisest of the Greek and of the Latin sages, were far short of Christian morals. And yet, when the luminous splendour of this has heightened the beauty of the morality transmitted by the Heathen, the infidel seizes on the subject thus cultivated and refined, and holds up the progeny of revelation as the rival of its parent.

But to return: It is hoped that there has been perceived the bearing of all these remarks on the point intended—the sense of the Church in her requisition of diligence in the studies helping to the knowledge of the Scriptures. But it is important to

the subject to remark further, that if we think ourselves indebted to the good providence of God, for our being at this moment emancipated from the Papal yoke, this benefit has been in a great measure accomplished by the aid of that species of literature which is more especially applicable to a right understanding of the Scriptures. When the reformation began, there was thought cause of suspicion of attachment to it, even in a zeal for the cultivating of the languages in which the Scriptures were written. Without the learning possessed by the reformers, they might have made disciples for martyrdom; but they would not have withdrawn nations from their subjection to the see of Rome. This was soon perceived on the other side; and consequently pains were taken to relieve the clerical body from the load of ignorance under which they lay. This, with the aid of the inquisition and other penal props, has delayed the impending downfall. During the delay, it has been conspicuous that the progress of literature produces, if not Protestantism, infidelity. Still, it is a known fact, that literature is much cultivated among those orders of the Church of Rome, which are looked to for the educating of ministers for foreign missions; and this is mentioned for the opportunity of the remark—how low the cause of Protestantism will sink, if Protestant ministers in general should be found insufficient to the management of the controversies between the Church of Rome and us.

But although a portion of this disadvantage belongs to every instance of a weak defence; yet, in the circumstances of these states, and considering the encouragement to literature, we need be under no apprehension of an advantage to the Roman

Catholick cause, from a prevalence of general ignorance in Protestant communions. Far from this, we may remark societies formerly considered as very defective in this particular, now adorned by clergymen of great literary merit, and indeed abounding in them. What is the inference resulting from the consideration of this? It is, that if the clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church should become remarkable for their ignorance, she must relinquish her share of the work of Christ, to societies which, as such, and so far as the present circumstance extends, will better deserve to be employed in it.

It may be hoped, that every minister of our Church, in proportion to his abilities, and according to the opportunities which God has given him, will do what in him lies to prevent this degradation, and, perhaps, this extinction of our communion; still, however, keeping in view that the literature which he pledges himself to cultivate, is such as helps to the right understanding of the Scriptures. This indeed opens a field of such wide extent, that it is difficult to say what branch of general learning is entirely excluded. But there is one branch of theological learning, which must be perceived especially pertinent to the promise. It is the biblical, or what helps to the ascertaining of the sacred text. Perhaps there have been more labour and more expense employed in that line in the present age, than in any other. And although the result seems to have been a conviction in the minds of the learned, that the common English translation of the Bible is even more valuable than had been before supposed; yet, since there is not perfection in human work, and since some imperfections are confessed in this, it be-



comes a minister of the Gospel to give a respectful ear to any sober criticism which respects the integrity of the sacred text, as put into our hands; to acknowledge the correctness of the criticism, if it be proved; and to show, for this may be shown, that no essential truth is thereby affected. But to be prepared for occasions of this sort, he must be furnished with information in that kind of learning; which is the more necessary, as there are persons very erroneous as we suppose, who eagerly arm themselves with weapons taken from this armoury. As their right to have recourse to it cannot be denied, nothing is left for us but to show the misapplication of what they gather there. But how can this be done, by those who are materially uninformed in the department?

There yet remains a branch of the question—"laying aside, as much as you may, all worldly cares and studies." Although in the Latin the expressions are stronger than in the English—"de mundanis et corporeis nihil solliciti;" it must have been directed against excessive care, and such a measure of occupation in worldly matters as is inconsistent with the high duties undertaken: for such a construction seems justified by the clause of the address made by the bishop in the office—"laying aside, as much as you may, all worldly cares and studies."

In a Church which confesses the right of her clergy to engage in the matrimonial connexion, and of course in the providing for a family, there cannot be supposed to have been an utter disregard of the consequent relations, because this would imply the idea of there being opposite and inconsistent duties.

There is therefore to be drawn a reasonable line of distinction; and it is less easy to do this than to state extremes which fall short of or exceed it. Perhaps the conceiving rightly of these may enable any man to ascertain the proper medium, according to the peculiar circumstances of his case.

One of the extremes is neglect, amounting to a desertion of natural duty, which, as already remarked, could not have been the object of the promise. But there can be no doubt that it was designed, in the first place, against engaging in any other occupation, unless this should become necessary for support: and then against the engaging in it in such sort as to prevent the discharge of the ministerial vows, so far as the other engagements will permit; for doubtless they will always permit in a considerable degree; and further, that as the having of recourse to them is the dictate of necessity, they should be chosen with a view to the circumstance of their harmonizing, as much as possible, with what the heart is supposed the most engaged in; the contributing to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Besides these things, it seems altogether incongruous, after being bound by the vows now under discussion, to engage in those hazardous pursuits which not only engross a man's thoughts and the active portions of his time, but plant the thorn of anxiety within his pillow. They may be called for by the wants of social life; but there is no call on a clergyman, to commit himself to so great a danger of the breaking of his most sacred promises.

It is not here forgotten, how much may be said, even in regard to ministers who have support attached to their vocation, to prove that the thoughts

of a person may be generally bestowed on the world, while yet they are often enough drawn off from its concerns to have his mind seasoned with a sense of heavenly things. This is true, while yet there is in the matter in question a material difference between a layman and the pastor of a flock. Religion calls off the former, at times from his habitual occupation ; of the latter the habitual occupation ought to be ecclesiastical duties, and the preparation for them. There is no portion of his time, in which he is not liable to be summoned, if health permit, to the exercise of his function. And whether called or not, no considerable space of time will pass in which, if faithful, he will not be engaged in what has more or less relation to it.

But there has not yet been opened the full extent of the question. The candidate is required to promise, that he will lay aside, or be *nihil sollicitus*, not only "of the study of the world," *de mundanis*, but also "of the study of the flesh," *de corporeis*. The last word seems levelled at a measure of sensuality, not amounting to intemperance, yet lowering any man, and especially a clergyman, in the moral scale. Let it not be understood, as wishing to extort from the institutions of the Church an abridgment of the Christian liberty, which St. Paul admitted, when he said, "*as using this world without abusing it.*" It is only maintained that, independently on intemperance, there may be an immoderate attachment to conviviality ; and that this, while it is derogatory to any man, has the difference in relation to a minister and to others, that it destroys his usefulness, and yet perhaps not theirs, in their respective occupations. Be it further remarked, that the faulty

propensity has been contemplated as allied to social enjoyment: it seems hardly necessary to add, that without this union, there is aggravated ignominy in the former.

There is often discussed the subject, how far a clergyman may engage in one or another species of social entertainment, liable to be abused to dissipation. Without any disposition to lay down restrictions on Christian liberty, there cannot be overlooked the fact, that even they who plead for the greatest extent of clerical license in this way, are not apt to think highly of the clerical merit of those who use it. The truth is, the professional occupation of a clergyman is so little in unison with the relaxations to which he is thus solicited, that neither serious persons, nor those remarkable for levity, conceive of their being easily blended. Its lowering of him in the estimation of either description, and especially of both, is a loud admonition to him to be found in his proper calling. These remarks are made without a view to social entertainments involving what is licentious or profane. A clergyman's attendance on any thing of this sort, may reasonably be interpreted as a virtual renunciation of his instructions from the pulpit.

There remain three questions; but agreeably to notice given in the beginning, two of them are to be passed over, the sixth and the eight, as they stand in the service.

QUESTION VII.—“Will you maintain and set forwards, as much as in you lieth, quietness, peace, and love among all Christian people, and especially among them that are or shall be committed to your charge?”

The compilers seem to have had their minds so full of the importance of this inquiry, as to labour for words, to place the subject in all the lights of which it is capable. "Will you maintain"—that is, continue, or keep inviolate on your part; "and set forwards"—that is, advance the design, and concur in all measures contributing to it. "As much as in you lieth:" that is, not feebly, but with the full force of your endeavours. "Quietness:" the lowest grade of unity, yet having a shade of difference from the higher grades, although aiding them. "Peace:" there may be quietness in the conduct, while there is in the heart discord: to which peace is here opposed. But there may be both quietness and peace, without the sympathies of Christian charity, and the variety of beneficence in which they issue: which, under the name of "love," are to be promoted "among all Christian people." This, as will be shown, is the same with people of every description. But as the opportunities of a man are especially within the sphere in which he principally moves, there is added, "especially among them that are or shall be committed to your charge."

It is probable that this question is never proposed and answered on any occasion of ordination, without its exciting of an esteem for the service, in the minds of the persons present; nor, if the compilers should be thought of, without an honouring of their wisdom and their virtue, evidenced in this correct apprehension of one of the most important uses of the office for the duties of which they were here providing.

If we were to consider the Gospel ministry in the light of an institution merely civil, there surely cannot be conceived of an expedient better adapted to

restrain in many instances, and to moderate in many more, the angry passions of mankind. This effect it produces, in a great measure, independently on a disposition in the minister to promote peace and union ; and merely by means of the devotion and the addresses, in which he will, officially at least, hold up to the eyes of men the high obligations to which they have in this respect been subjected by their common Father. How much greater will be the effect, in proportion as the official tendency is supported by personal endeavours ; and where these have the additional sanction of example !

It has indeed been not uncommon, to hear the clerical order reproached with having contributed to the fomenting of discord, as well between independent nations as between contending parties, into which every people becomes divided. But however some ecclesiasticks may have been guilty of the charge, there is a fallacy in the stating of it. When stations of high trust and influence have been filled by men who become clergymen solely with a view to them ; it might have been expected, that with the same talents and the same ambition, they would have played precisely the same parts, had their stations been as professedly secular as they have been rendered by a spirit in contrariety to their profession. But in the general charge, the attention is principally confined to a few made conspicuous by their crimes ; and there is lost sight of the many who, in their circumscribed and unnoticed spheres, have contributed to the best interests of society ; as in many ways, so especially in this—the labouring effectually for its peace.

It was intimated, that a remark is necessary on the

expression, "all Christian people." When the service was composed, all the people with whom the candidate was to have any intercourse, were Christians in profession. Although there was prevailing among them much unchristian strife, in those days of England's vacillating between Popery and Reformation; the attendant uncharitableness was to be moderated by the minister, so far as was within the compass of his means; but the principle on which this was required, extends to the cultivation of the same Christian virtue, to persons of every and of no religion. This circumstance has been thought worthy of notice, lest the letter of the question, by confining charitable deportment to Christian people, should be construed as dispensing with it towards those who are not Christians even in name. This, contrary to what could have been designed, would describe our Church as alien from the precepts of Scripture, which enjoin us to "follow peace with all men; as we have opportunity to do good unto all men;" and to bear ourselves "with meekness to them that are without."

If this be due to the open deniers of our holy religion, more evidently does the same conduct become us, towards those who profess with ourselves to look for salvation to the mercy of God, extended through the same Redeemer; and to be under subjection to the same holy law in Scripture. What though this may, in our estimation, be mixed with considerable error: we are not to countenance it; but to make as much allowance for the prejudices of those who hold it, as may be warranted by the circumstances of their several cases. There are some, indeed, who to show how much they soar above illiberality of

religious sentiment, would throw down every barrier dividing our communion from some others in visible administration, because they think the existing differences are of no importance. Among the objections to such a plan, it is not the least, that it tends to the disturbance of peace and charity; while the securing of these is its professed object. And such must be the effect, unless these mistaken promoters of unity can persuade one of two parties whom they may at any time aim to reconcile, to give up points which they think involved in Christian verity. So far as there have been attempts to draw the Episcopal Church into this plan, liberal as some conceive, the design has uniformly exacted the sacrifice of the prominent characteristicks of our system. But it is to be wished, that while the clergy see through the veil of such expedients, they will embrace all opportunities of cultivating friendly communications, and an interchange of personal civilities with ministers of other denominations; it being understood that their individual characters are such as to invite to such a disposition. An essential ingredient in the terms of so good an understanding, must be the discountenancing of all uncharitableness towards them, in the members of our own communion. In every religious society, more or less, there are zealots who eagerly embrace every opportunity of making a blow at the usefulness and the reputation of ministers of other societies, considered by them as rivals. Perhaps it may be the result of partiality; but our communion is here thought to be as free as any other from this unworthy kind of zeal. It is desirable, that there should be none of it; and that our clergy in particular would distinguish themselves in the dis-



countenancing of it, and of a religious party spirit in every way in which it may be manifested. Thus will they be discharging their promise to "maintain and set forwards quietness, peace, and love, among all Christian people."

If this becomes us, the principle must more forcibly apply to the communion of which the candidate is to be a minister. However to be lamented the circumstance, that the body of professing Christians in these states is divided into difference of profession, extending much further than any material difference of sentiment; yet it cannot but be perceived, that this is owing partly to causes which bring no reproach on the Christian name, and partly to other causes, the blame of which can hardly be said to argue a present proneness to separation. So far as our country has been peopled from different countries of the old world, whose sovereignties and whose churches were independent, it does not appear that a body of emigrants from any one of them could claim a control over the emigrants from another. And even so far as separate communions have resulted from controversy, and what we may think unnecessary separation in the old world; the continuance of the separation in a new country where there reigns a confessed equality of privilege, cannot fairly be imputed to a propensity to feud; however desirable the healing of the breach, and a disposition on each side to that effect. How far union ought to be promoted by either party's recession from former opinion, is out of the question; for it requires conviction: and the subject at present, is not truth, but charity. In all that has been referred to, there seems but little ground for infidelity to

triumph. But where angry controversy arises within any communion, in which the points are evidently such as that there may be tolerated a diversity of sentiment, without endangering essential truths ; in which, notwithstanding this, the passions of people, of ministers of the Gospel in particular, become heated to a degree of warmth, and issue in lengths of uncharitableness which all good men deplore, even when seen in the concerns of civil life ; it tends more, perhaps, than any thing else that can be named, both to inspire and to confirm doubts of the truth of a religious system, erroneously supposed to produce these mischiefs, which, however, are in contrariety to the spirit of its institutions, and to the plain letter of very many of its precepts.

When measures were begun for the organizing of the Episcopal Church in these states, perhaps there never was a communion in circumstances which more exposed it to the dangers resulting from diversity of opinion. But although it cannot be said that nothing of this sort has occurred ; yet, under the blessing of the great Head of the Church, it has not prevented such a harmony as led to our being fully consolidated and organized ; and as is here trusted, with the prospect of perpetuity. These things are mentioned, with the view of recommending to every candidate by whom they may be heard, and further, of beseeching by all those sacred ties which are to unite him to the ministry, to do all in his power for the preservation of that unity of our Church of which he finds her in possession, or for the restoration of it, if he should find it broken. Occasions may occur calling on him to bear and forbear for its preservation. Let him in such cases seriously inquire,

to what lengths concession may be carried without a crime. That conscience is not to be sacrificed to peace, is a point conceded. But before a man brings her sacred name for the sanctioning of a breach of order, let him examine his own heart for the sincerity of the sentiment. The world will compare it with his conduct. We need but to read history, and without this we need but to look around us, to know, that under this venerable plea there is often a straining at a gnat, and a swallowing of a camel. And wherever this is perceived, we may be sure that in the plea there is unhallowed passion sheltering itself under the name of conscience.

Although there cannot but be perceived, that what has been just now stated comes within the promise exacted by the Church, yet she has especially an eye in the case of every minister, to "the people committed to his charge."

There shall be here briefly traced the influence of this pacifick disposition, as it respects, 1st, A minister in his private concerns: 2d, The part he is to take in the concerns of his Church: and, 3d, The interest of himself and of his parishioners, in questions which concern the commonwealth.

In his personal concerns it will doubtless be allowed, that the moderation which is commendable in a man of any description, is especially to be looked for in him. Not that he, any more than another man, is bound to relinquish a just right. But we know, with how little litigation some men go through the world in comparison of others; and this is principally the result of the difference of character under consideration. If there be here rightly understood the precepts of the Gospel addressed to this very

point, a clergyman will forego a small right, rather than assert it at the hazard of great contention ; and he will pursue a just right, not only honourably, but with temper, and without unnecessary irritation. If the question of right should be involved in a contention between him and his flock, the same principles apply as in any other case ; except with this difference, that it should lead him seriously to review his own conduct, to ascertain whether he have faithfully discharged to them the duties on which any engagements made to him were predicated. For although, in such an inquiry the issue is not to rest with the party who may be benefited by an unjust decision, yet there is a difference when the question is put between a man's own conscience and his God.

Next, in regard to the same temper, as it should influence in the common concerns of a particular congregation. Although there is for ever to be detested the illiberal policy which would shut the mouth of their minister, on any question which may occur ; yet it becomes every man, and him most of all, not to be too positive, or too pertinacious in his opinions. The questions here alluded to are such as do not involve any thing, wherein either Christian verity or ecclesiastical discipline is at stake. For where one or the other of these is threatened, he cannot support with too much firmness, although even this should be without passion, the principles to which he is bound by the most solemn ties. In his personal conduct nothing should divert him from them ; and if, in the conduct of others, he cannot prevent error or irregularity, yet he can keep at a distance from all allowance of it.

For the promoting of unity in a congregation, there is nothing more important, than that he should discountenance the forming of a party, of which his interests are the especial object. If there be persons whom he supposes to be his enemies, to say absolutely that it cannot in any instance be the effect of malice, would be rash. But instances of this are rare. In general, either there is a cause, and then it would be unreasonable to be offended; or the persons are in error, and a little time will convince them of it. If the dissatisfaction arise from the failure of attraction in the publick administrations of the minister; we all know, how different are the tastes of different persons. No man ought to wish to be celebrated, for accomplishments which nature has not bestowed on him. There may be, however, a want of discernment in the dissatisfied. But of this it would be as unreasonable to complain, as of a want of sight, if it had been denied to them. But it may be said, and the fact is here acknowledged, that some complain from mere fastidiousness, and from a love of novelty, which will be satisfied with nothing long. For the inconveniences resulting from this there are but two remedies, or rather alleviations. The first is, to be very diligent in the discharge of those duties, to which there is a competency in all furnished with the qualifications indispensable to a proper engaging in the vocation; and perhaps it would be difficult to find a congregation with the greater part of whom this would not be a sufficient counterpoise to the discouragements arising from caprice. But if, after all, any portion of such discouragement should seem intolerable, a clergyman ought to reflect, that the evil is deeply grounded in certain properties of hu-

man nature; and that to be too much troubled by it, is to arraign the wisdom of the Creator, who may be considered saying as he did to Jonah, "Dost thou well to be angry?" The wayward disposition thus complained of being as much according to the common course of things, as were the rapid growth, and the as rapid withering of the gourd.

But, under the present point, there is still a matter not to be passed unnoticed. Sometimes, the feuds of a congregation are the result of the rival interests of different ministers. If this be the effect of a competition for the charge of a congregation, the conduct to be observed on the occasion is so conspicuous, and the correct path has been so often trodden by competitors for civil offices, and this, in some cases, without the control of religion, and with only discretion for a guide, that the matter cannot be mistaken by an honourable mind. This is however to be remembered, that what is supposed to have been done in some cases from the principle of honour, should in this case be prompted by the fear of God. There occurs more difficulty, when rival ministers are associated in the same charge, each having partisans, who conceive of a merit in evidencing their friendship for him, by hostility to his rival. The clergyman who condescends to be the head of such a party, disgraces his profession, as much as he could do by gross intemperance. In the supposed conjunction of clerical labours, it can hardly happen but that each shall have peculiar friends; who, in many instances, became such from circumstances merely incidental. And if it have been from preference, what profession is there not liable to the same? If one clergyman is to conceive

of a parishioner as his enemy, because he is his brother pastor's friend; there arises from it an argument against the ministry itself, more weighty than has ever been brought against it, either by infidels or by those mistaken Christians who have denied the divine designation of such an order. Were it here foreseen of any candidate for holy orders, that he would be capable of harbouring such an unsanctified spirit, it would hardly be worth the trouble to contemplate his case in this address. But on the supposition that a minister may be drawn unwarily into difficulties, from reluctance to the painfulness, and perhaps apparent ingratitude of checking what may wear the appearance of friendship for himself, though venting itself in unkindness to his brother, the present caution is given with the hope, that no occasion will render it of consequence; but with the further hope, that if this should happen, the caution will be of use.

Finally, there are to be spoken of those jarring sentiments and inclinations, which in all free governments, or rather in governments of every description, agitate the minds of the people, and throw almost every man into one party or another, according to the view which he takes of whatever concerns the publick weal. Doubtless a man does not divest himself of any civil right, by becoming a minister of the Gospel. Besides this, as the duty of the citizen cannot be dispensed with by the duty of the minister, his testimony is to be borne on all fit occasions, and in a temperate way, to what he conceives to be the true interests of his country. But it will be allowed, that all are not equally called on to take a lead in, and give a tone to, publick measures: and

the only restraint here designed to be laid on a clergyman is, that of those not so called, he is one. His taking of the ground here intimated, will not prevent his having an influence in moderating the rage of party : it will rather contribute to his possessing of such an influence, which prepares him for the discharge of one of the best of civil offices, and one to which he pledges himself in his answer to the present question. But if he become himself a partisan, either he is insignificant, or he adds fuel to the flame. One of the most likely effects of his error will be, the utterly disqualifying of himself from being of use to persons of the party opposed to him, in any of those seasons which call for religious information or consolation. It is not an improbable event, that he may drive them from the Church of which he is a minister. It often happens, that a man deserts his religious communion on some very trivial pretence ; and among other pretences, there is sometimes that of his minister's not being altogether to his mind. If this be mere caprice, it does not seem that the conscience of the minister has wherewith to be much concerned. But if it be from his having gone so much out of his proper vocation as is here supposed, he cannot render a good account of himself, either to God or to the Church. There is no need to enlarge ; there being few who would not agree in the position. But if it be not correct, and considering how the minds of men become heated and prejudiced by civil dissensions, besides the divisions already subsisting in Christendom, in order to enable ministers of the Gospel to be of use, there should be in every neighbourhood another division of every society, according to the



existing state of parties. But even this would not answer the purpose altogether : for it would not prevent the ecclesiastical zealot from suffering in the estimation of those who think with him in politics, but who will think meanly of the interest which he takes in his proper calling. Such persons will avail themselves of him as a tool, if his talents render him a proper one to work with ; but they will not revere him as a spiritual shepherd.

The leading sentiments of these remarks ought to be considered as enforced to the conscience of a candidate, by what the bishop is to say to him expressly in the service—"We have good hope that you have well weighed these things with yourself, long before this time." In consideration of these impressive words, it may seem, that the present labour might have been spared : and indeed the principal benefit expected from it is, that if ever offered to a candidate who has indulged the idea that the promises are made in ceremony, and that they are little to be regarded in succeeding life ; the great compass of them which has been exhibited may tend to counteract the delusion, and show, that if any correspondency is to be expected between words and the intentions of the mind, great and permanent should be the result.

There is the more reason to draw the attention to this, as some men, after binding their souls under so weighty an obligation, have considered the clerical profession as one which may be taken up and laid down at pleasure ; and have even expressed surprise at measures adopted to render the effect of their renunciation as permanent as that of their ordination was intended to have been. The question of

propriety, as considered at present, is foreign to the case of a man who has bound himself by vows, which he afterwards, on due inquiry, judges to be contrary to truth or morals. In such a case, there is no difficulty in ascertaining the correct principle, although an awful danger in making the application : and were we to suppose it to happen relatively to the ministry of this communion, still we must perceive the propriety of severing the party from the body. But for a man to imagine that he may be a minister of the Gospel, or divest himself of the character, as it may at one time or at another suit his temporal convenience, implies an opinion of the office not warranted by Scripture ; and if it were understood between the Church and the candidate when she admits him to the ministry, it would be an irreverent use of the highest sanctions of religion, to suffer him to take on his tongue the promises which are in the answers to the questions occasioning these remarks. Whether they will have any good effect, however small, in fencing the sanctity of the ministerial calling, is known only to Him, without whom even Paul must have planted, and Apollos have watered in vain.

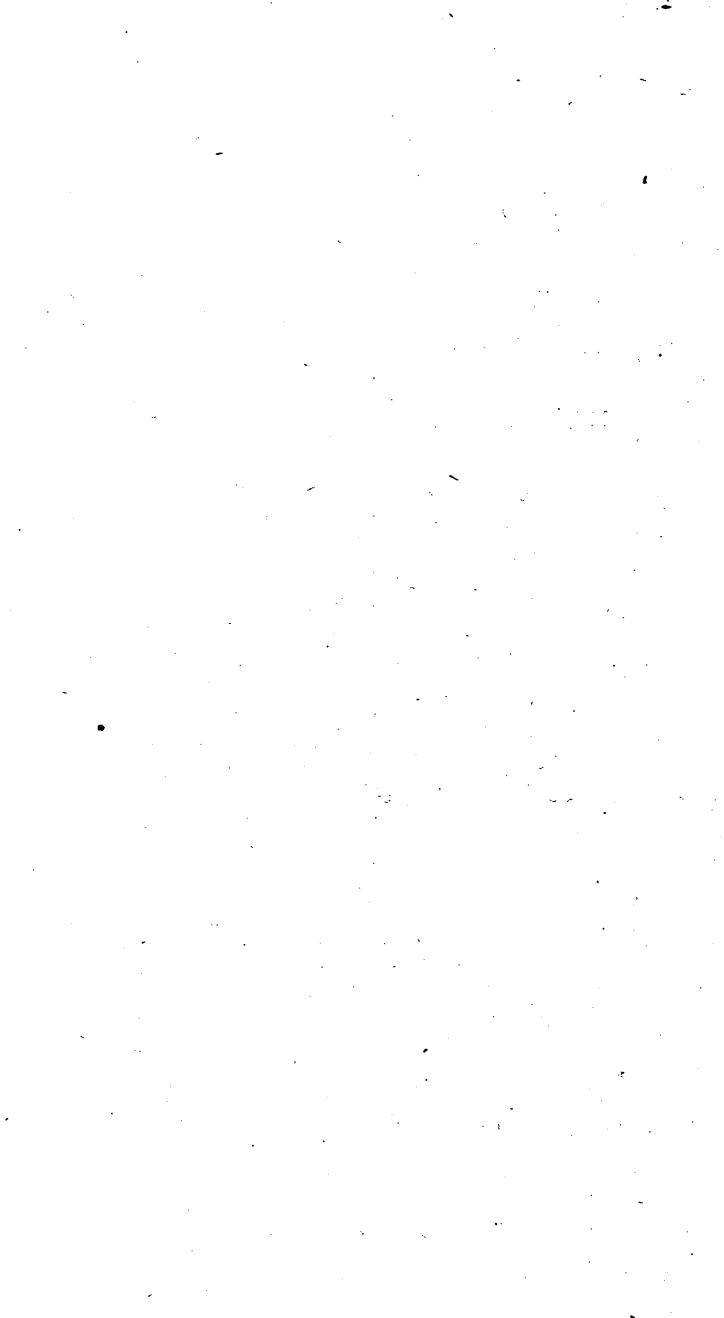
In proportion as the remarks shall have the effect designed by them, the issue will be the preparation of the mind of any candidate for the concluding address to him by the bishop, after his receiving of the answers to the proposed questions—"Almighty God, who hath given you a will to do all these things, grant also unto you strength and power to perform the same ; that he may accomplish his work which he hath begun in you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."



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A  
COMMENTARY  
ON  
THE DUTIES  
OF  
THE PUBLIC MINISTRY.

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## PREFATORY ADDRESS.

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BROTHER [OR BRETHREN,]

WHEN I began the Commentaries on the Questions in the Ordination Services, my design was limited to them: but, while engaged in the work, I perceived the imperfection with which it would be finished, in reference to the subjects now to follow; unless they should be discussed more largely, than was exacted by the points on which the questions had respectively their bearings. In consideration of this, I determined to extend the design; and to make a further demand on the attention of candidates: although aware, that while there will be some matters of duty, there will be others, rather of opinion or of taste. If the remarks which are to follow, should in any measure give a proper direction to your own reflections; and much more, if they should throw any light on the right discharge of the duties to be spoken of; there will be so far an accomplishment of the object which the Church contemplated; to be attended to in the private examination of every candidate for the priesthood.

WM. WHITE.



## DUTIES OF THE MINISTRY.

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THE duties to be spoken of may be arranged under the three heads :—

1. Of Preaching ;
2. Of Officiating in the ordinary Service of the Church ; and,
3. Of Administering in the Offices.

### 1. *Of Preaching.*

Perhaps there may be required a reason, for the giving of the first place to the exercise of preaching : since it is a remark frequently in the mouths of consistent members of our communion, that the chief design of holding religious assemblies, should be the engaging in the exercises of worship. The sentiment is considered as correct : but before it can apply, there must be presumed a constituted religious body. When our Lord, after his resurrection, delivered to his disciples the commission—"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature ;" there were not formed any churches, in the different countries afterwards converted to the faith. Even at the present day, a minister may be under circumstances, which call on him to open the great



truths of the Christian Revelation ; to the doing of which, there is no necessity of his being in a pulpit, and furnished with other accompaniments of an orderly administering in a congregation ; while yet, neither is there in the act any offence against the prescribed order of the Church. In short, it is wished to hold up the idea, that there is no time and no place, in which a clergyman may not perceive an obligation laid on him, to discourse in such a manner as falls under the name of preaching. This, indeed, may be said of prayer also ; yet not of such prayer as implies his being therein the leader of an organized Christian congregation. In the estimation of some persons, it is the commendation of a clergyman, that with his official habiliments he lays aside his official character. There is no design entertained of taking the contrary extreme, in recommending what would render that character the less useful, by the being obtrusive ; and even degrade it to the absurdity of " casting pearls before swine." But a protest is here entered against the far worse evil, of a clergyman's so forgetting of his vocation, as to tempt himself to levity, or to justify indecorum towards him, or even to bar the possibility of giving a religious turn to conversation. And as for the description of people, who delight in severing between the clerical and the ordinary character ; if ever, in the changes of life, they should have a call for religious counsel, the companion of their hours of gayety is the last they would think of resorting to for the benefit.

What is to be said on the subject of preaching, may be comprehended under the two heads of instruction and persuasion.

The word "instruction," is here taken in a comprehensive sense ; as signifying what has a tendency to inform or to convince ; although, perhaps, presenting nothing new to the understandings of those for whom it is designed. On religious subjects, it is difficult to find out, for persons habitually attendant in the house of God, either general arguments or appropriate remarks, which shall be entirely new to them. Besides, it may be affirmed of any preacher, with whom the doing so is a favourite object, that he will be less likely to feed them with the solid and wholesome food of evangelical instruction, than with the frothy garnish of some empty conceits ; or perhaps with the deadly poison of some dangerous errors. Yet, let it not be imagined, that, independently on novelty, the preacher has no field before him for the exercise of his own ingenuity, and for the gratifying of the intellectual faculties of his auditory. There will always be room for this, in the perspicuity of his statements ; in the pertinency of his arguments ; and in the placing of ordinary truths in such points of view, as are the best calculated to open the minds of a congregation to the interest which they have in them. . Where these are the objects aimed at by the speaker, the hearers are not apt to become indifferent, in proportion to the information before possessed by them of the subject. Indeed, the contrary has been the fact ; which may be made the more probable, by a reference to any of those secular professions, which pre-eminently call for intellectual cultivation. For instance, in listening to an argument in law, when the same is handled judiciously, it is not the less welcome to the ear of a proficient, from the circumstance that he had

frequently made the point in question the object of his studies: or rather, he will listen the more attentively to the discussion of it. Now, although the subjects of the pulpit are not like those of the bar, within the comprehension of a few only; yet the former are not, on that account, the less connected with relations and with consequences remote from ordinary observation; except as occasionally brought before the mind, by some of those channels of instruction, of which the principal is that of the pulpit. So far as observation has extended, it goes to certify, that attention is always excited by the people's early making of the discovery, that the prominent property of the sermon is its being an appeal to their understanding, on some subject in which they conceive themselves to have an interest. It may be hoped, that at least with a great proportion of the congregation, the cause of this is a wish to be instructed or confirmed in some truth, or in some duty of religion. And further, it is not unreasonable to conceive, that this may be the case even of those, who, in any other place than a church, are indifferent to such discussions. The fact stated may in some measure be accounted for, by their being thus recognised as reasonable creatures. Still, however unsuitable a place the pulpit for adulation, or for encouraging complacency in self; yet the respect, here contemplated, is very reasonable, and should be paid, not on this account only, but with a view to the high ends to which all preaching should be directed.

From these considerations, it may be laid down as an invariable rule, not only that a prominent property of preaching should be its being addressed to

the understanding; but that its being so should be easily, and in the beginning, discernible by the hearers. There has been often given the advice, that the preacher open with some striking remark, in order to awaken the attention. The advice is not here faulted, but indeed approved of. We may however fear, that it has been often misunderstood; and that many a preacher, aiming to put the lesson in practice, has set off with mere declamation; and having arrived at his division, has to descend so low from the high tone set off in, as that what follows becomes insipid. Let there then, when circumstances permit, be an introductory remark, as striking as the subject can suggest, and as it can be made by the ability of the speaker. But if none such can be found, without there being more show than substance, or without defrauding the body of the discourse of the matter belonging to it, let the introduction be as plain as possible; or let there be nothing which can be strictly so called, in preference to the fabricating of an exordium, approaching too near to the character of sound without sense.

Perhaps, in regard to what has been recommended of addressing the understanding principally; there may be demanded the occasional exception of the preacher's having taken a subject, that admits of an address to the affections, from the beginning to the end of the discourse. But we may reject such an exception, even when the subject is in the hands of a person who can execute the design with considerable judgment. This is a point on which we must be supposed to speak partly from our respective feelings. But although these are not precisely the same in all, the difference may be thought to

exist, not in substance, but in degree. Even when a preacher, whose character is approved of, and whose talents are respected, manifests the design here questioned, of making the whole an address to the affections; and even when the office, thus undertaken, is conducted without offence to the understanding, and with the advantage of no small display of eloquence, it will be found to leave the mind unaffected: and the like apathy may be observed in a congregation generally. In short, there seems to apply the adage, "forewarned, forearmed." The hearer perceives the design of the speaker, and puts himself in a posture of defence. It is otherwise, when the eloquence seems that of the argument; and not of the person, through whose mouth it comes.

But, if even what is here pointed out, and only occasionally practised, is an evasion of a reasonable and important maxim, how much more so is that kind of preaching, in which the principal property is declamation; the substance of sacred subjects evaporating in verbiage, and perhaps in forced figures, and far-fetched conceits, mistaken for eloquence! The early part of life being especially in danger of this absurd association of vanity and insufficiency, it is an additional reason for the bestowing of endeavours, to be acquainted with the principles of eloquence. Even if they should not excite the genius of the student to any considerable attainments in that line, they will at least prevent his being captivated by that false varnish, which, however it may impose on ignorant and fanciful persons, will be despised by the judicious scholar, and give no satisfaction to the serious Christian.

Different from this fault, but alike foreign to sound reasoning, is a dogmatical delivery of the sentiments of the preacher, in a manner which seems to imply, that they are to be received on the ground of his authority. There should be carefully avoided every thing of this sort, which is rather calculated to excite in the minds of the hearers, doubts of the most obvious truths, than to force on them the belief of others, which, however demonstrable, are supposed to admit of specious contradiction, in the very circumstance of their being made subjects of discussion. Besides, that this assumption of dictatorial authority is always offensive to the understandings of mankind; it is a pity to endanger the prostrating of the reverence due to the ministerial character, whatever this may be, by arrogating to it more than it can rightfully claim; especially at a time when there must be perceived a much more popular tendency to the extreme of lowering the character, than to another extreme prevalent in former ages, of an immoderate exaltation of it. In other departments of publick discussion; as at the bar, and in every description of representative assembly; the speaker is kept within bounds in this particular, by the danger of leaving ungarded parts of his argument, in which he will be sure to be assailed by his opponents. In the pulpit, the sanctity of the place should produce the same caution, making a preacher as much afraid to hazard any untenable position, or to utter the most demonstrable positions without their proofs, as if he were sure that some person would rise up in contradiction of his discourse. And he ought to remember, that, however the decorum of the occasion may prevent this,

the mind will be the more captious, under the advantage ungenerously taken, and because of the silence imposed on the tongue. The advice here given ought especially to be attended to, in any censures passed on infidelity. All railing, and all insufficient reasoning, gives the infidel an advantage, of which he will not fail to avail himself. And even in the case of a wavering or partially informed Christian, when he has heard from the pulpit what he subsequently finds to be unsustainable, and especially if it be misrepresentation of opposite opinion, the result is at least thrown into the scale of the very error which the preacher had intended to oppose.

In insisting on the prominent property of addresses to the understanding, there is not recommended a preacher's entertaining of his audience with metaphysical discussions, or with matters taken from any of the various branches of scientific erudition. Even this, however, is to be understood with the exception of a very short reference, when it may serve to explain the purely religious matter in hand. And the exception is made, principally because of the necessity sometimes lying on the preacher, of availing himself of the original languages of Scripture, or of some custom of the ages in which it was indited. Even of this species of literature, he should be sparing; both because his habitual topicks of popular edification ought not to lean too much to the occasions of such criticism: and because of the danger of subjecting himself to the charge of an ostentatious display of learning. Yet, that there may sometimes be the call for it here admitted, must be evident from the course of the Divine dispen-

sations, which has subjected us to the necessity of resorting to such helps, for the understanding of the books of Revelation. With this exception, however, an intrusion on an audience with discussions, the sources of which are not accessible to the greater number of them, must be, to say the least, a wasting of the opportunity of bringing before them what might be interesting and instructive. There is still less to be said for any of those recondite reasonings, in which the preacher is not only not likely to be followed by the generality of his hearers; but the points to be established are not of such a nature as to come directly home to their everlasting interests; however they may have a remote relation to them, not easily to be discerned by an ordinary understanding. In favour of the exercise of ingenuity in such a sphere, and to the exhibition of learning also, a plea is sometimes made, in consideration of superior advantages possessed by some auditories, in point of literary information. To give even a specious appearance to the plea, there ought to be an auditory made up of scientific characters. Even in such a case, which nothing but some extraordinary circumstance can give occasion to, the hearers may be supposed content, and, if not so, they ought to be content, however superior to the commonality in the furniture of their understandings, to be now brought to a level with them, in regard to their common frailties, their common duties, and their common hopes. But before an assembly, in which there is at least a considerable proportion of people possessed of no more than an ordinary measure of information, to accomodate the discourse merely to select characters, who have obtained a higher grade of it, is one



of the most decisive proofs which a preacher can give, of his being alien in spirit from the Divine Founder of the ministry ; who stamped on the institution what was to be a property of it at all times, when he said---“ To the poor the Gospel is preached.” These at all events, and, perhaps, besides these, many more will be entirely uninterested in the kind of preaching, against which there is here put in a caution. Even as to those for whom it is designed exclusively, it must be evident, that the object was rather their amusement than their edification. And the probability is, that they will disapprove of the compliment tendered to them, at the expense of those who are thus defrauded of their share of what the place and the occasion call for.

It falls in with this part of the subject to remark, that in proportion to the importance of addressing the understanding, is that of the perspicuity of what is thus addressed to it, and of clothing it in language which shall also be as perspicuous as possible. By this is not meant that the argument of the sermon should be as naked as the demonstration of a mathematical proposition : Although, if man were so constituted, as that his affections were invariably to follow the convictions of his understanding, there could not be too near a resemblance between the subjects. But although information is here the subject, there is another purpose of preaching---that of persuasion : And, as was intimated, this is the oftenest endeavoured with effect, when it is not in the persuasive form ; but a truth is brought before the mind, and seen in those of its relations, which clothe it with a persuasion of its own. Now this is sometimes accomplished by incidental remarks, and even by an

happy choice of language. It may, however, safely be affirmed, that all amplification, and even every word which has no tendency to what has been stated, nor yet to make the intended truth the more clear to the understanding, may advantageously be omitted. For all superfluity, either in sentiment or in diction, is not only what may be spared, but is hostile to the object of the preacher, by making it the less distinct to the minds of the hearers. So that if the superfluity here complained of should even be combined with argument, applying directly to the purpose; yet the substance of the one is lost in the emptiness of the other. It would be a going beyond the proper limits of this address, to prescribe rules for the attainment of perspicuity. There is, however, one maxim strictly within these limits, and it is pre-eminent over every other—that of never undertaking to explain, or to prove, without a distinct perception of the subject, together with the appropriate arguments and elucidations. Perhaps perspicuity is never wanting, when the writer or the speaker perfectly understands his subject; unless, indeed, he writes or speaks hastily, and without due care.

There has been left much unsaid, which might have been brought forward profitably, on the subject of instruction. But it is time to go on to the other point—that of persuasion: taking the word in the enlarged sense, comprehensive of whatever comes under the head of motive. According to this, a minister will be persuasive, even when, with effect, he sets the judgments of God before the consciences of his hearers. This is a latitude of meaning, which

St. Paul implied when he said—"Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men."

We should carefully distinguish evangelical persuasion from that sort of preaching which is called an addressing of the passions. Some clergymen have aimed at this in such a way, as that the sensibilities intended to be excited have had no more a reference to devout affection, than if the hearers had been attending to a novel or to a play. Without any thing of this sort, the word of God may be so ministered, as to come home to the hearts of the people, and to produce in them a sense of sin, or holy resolution as to any of the various duties which it can respect. Ambition to excel in the other way, never fails to draw down the disapprobation of all well-informed and judicious persons. Some affect to be moved by it, lest their reputation for sensibility should suffer. And if there should be some, from whom the tears flow spontaneously, there is little probability, that the effect will be either the correcting of any fault, or the improving of any grace. Most of the descriptions which are heard of death-bed scenes, and of humanity under suffering, become exceedingly disgusting, on the principle here stated. It is not intended to deny, that such descriptions are nearly allied, and may be made subservient to duties, which it is within the province of the preacher to inculcate. But the complaint is, that the duties are too much lost sight of, in the labours to excite sympathy. And the matter to be inculcated is, that the excitement of this, without reference to a religious end, is as much out of the preacher's province, as would be his acting of a fictitious character on a stage.

There would be a great mistake in supposing, that argument and persuasion are so distinct, as not to be capable of combining in the same branches, and even in the same sentences of a discourse. Far from this, on an examination of some of the finest passages of any writer, celebrated for the talent of persuasion, it will be found, that the aim is the most effectually accomplished, when the conviction of the understanding would appear to be the only object. But it happens, that in his efforts for this, his sentiments take such a dress, as that while they compel an assent of the understanding, they excite a glow also of the affections. This might be illustrated in passages from eminent writers, both sacred and profane. Still, there are certain places in a sermon, in which a preacher especially sees opportunities of bringing home his truths to the consciences of his hearers ; and, through that medium, of exciting their hatred of what is evil, and their love and desire of what is good. Sometimes this is best done at the winding up of the different heads : which has the advantage of giving an agreeable variety to the discourse. In other instances, it is more naturally reserved to a concluding application. In this part of the discourse, there are opposite errors to be avoided. One of them, and what is to be found in writers of no mean fame, is the summing up of what had gone before, in inferences so naked, that they are like the scholia affixed by geometricians to their demonstrations. The other, is the going over the whole ground, with a laboured delineation of whatever of motive can be drawn out of the subject, to induce compliance with the duties comprehended in it. A reluctant hearer immediately puts himself into the

posture of defence, against an attack so formal and undisguised ; while a person more favourably disposed, anticipating the whole circle of sentiment to come—this being the part of the discourse, in which the least informed can commonly perceive the resulting uses—acquiesces in a cold approbation of them ; but is not the more persuaded by what is brought before him on the occasion. These alternate dangers are the best avoided, by the preacher's seizing of a few leading ideas, such as seem to him the most impressive ; and his taking in of no more of the preceding discourse than will arrange easily under those ideas, and contribute to their strength. Brevity is a circumstance essential to the effect.

It must be obvious, that all here said relates rather to the avoiding of fault, than to the attainment of excellence. The laying down of particular rules for this seems forbidden by the wonderful variety in the workings of the human heart ; and the no less variety of circumstances, on which the excitement of its affections must depend. However, some general directions shall be attempted.

One is, always to choose a subject obviously and eminently interesting. Importance, indeed, may be said to belong to every truth and every duty of religion : but it is in different degrees. Besides, the remark does not relate to a subject, merely as it is in itself : which may be in the highest degree important, because of its relation to the whole system ; and yet not such, as that human interest is so obviously discernible in it, as in some others. A preacher is the more inexcusable, when, in the choice of a subject, he overlooks the attribute here mentioned ; because of the advantage which he

possesses in this respect, over publick speakers in other departments. At the bar, and in a deliberating assembly, the subject is dictated by circumstances, over which the speaker has no control; but in the pulpit, and considering the wide range of subjects closely connected with the everlasting interests of the hearers, it would seem, that nothing can betray into a choice of one of minor consequences; except either a weak judgment of the person, or the paltry ambition of showing himself ingenious, with little concern how far the matter may tend to religious culture.

Another direction, is for the preacher to feel his own interest in the subject chosen. And this is a consideration, which weighs much in favour of an attentive contemplation of every subject, on which he undertakes to prepare himself for the pulpit. It may easily be conceived, indeed, from the difference of susceptibility at different times, that a man, undertaking a subject without much thought, and yet under a conviction of its truth and of its importance, may find his mind not easily subjected to the correspondent feelings. But this can hardly happen—the subject being still supposed important in itself—if he submit it to the exercise of the mind, which we call study—if he revolve it over and over—if he be solicitous to adopt such an arrangement, as is the most likely to render it intelligible—convincing—impressive: And if, to all this, he add a looking up to Divine Grace; not for immediate inspiration, which he has no right to expect; but for an influence, known only in its effects, giving an holy direction to the mind, and warding off the undue influence, which might have been the result of human frailty,

There can hardly be supposed such an habitual discipline as this, in the work of pulpit preparation, without its exciting of some measure of sensibility; which, produced by such means, is certainly no weak ground on which to hope, through the Divine Grace spoken of, for a similar sensibility in others.

Another direction, is for the preacher to have a view, not merely to the soundness of the materials which he brings together, but to their being of such a description, and exhibited in such a form, as shall be the most likely to command an inward testimony on the part of those for whose edification they are designed. Let it be supposed, that from pure motives of benevolence, we were addressing a man on some subject, very interesting to his fortune or to his reputation, and that what passes is in the presence of a near friend of his, and one whose opinion we know to be weighty in his estimation. How careful should we be to conciliate to our cause the interest of such a friend! In urging any argument, how much pleased should we be with the conviction, that it must be agreeable to his sense of things! And how carefully should we wave any consideration, in our own eye correct, but concerning which we might doubt of carrying his consent along with us! Now, exactly such a friend, in the case supposed, is the monitor called Conscience, in the breasts of all our hearers; with the exception perhaps of a few, whose consciences may be seared, and whose cases may be desperate. To a minister who has a conscience of his own, there can be no consideration more powerfully dissuasive from all paltry passions centering in himself, than the evident fact, that they forfeit the influence of this powerful pleader. On

the contrary, as it must be through his instrumentality, if the preacher be so happy as to persuade ; nothing can be more evident, than that this is a circumstance to be attended to, in the materials presented for the occasion : and this, not only when appeals are made directly to the conscience—which, however, will be done to great advantage, when they arise easily out of the subject—but also in the scope of the sermon generally, and in that of every one of its branches.

The last direction which shall be given, is the preacher's judging favourably of his own discourses ; not in proportion to their becoming subjects of praise, but in proportion to their appearing to have made impressions on the minds of the people. Of what passes in the minds of others, we must, of course, be but imperfect judges. Yet, sometimes the carriage, and sometimes the countenance, may show that the good seed has taken at least a temporary possession of the soil. As to mere praise, it is sometimes bestowed in such a manner as shows, that the hearer has had nothing in view, beyond some personal accomplishment of the speaker ; or at most, the dress in which his subject was exhibited ; without any connexion of it either with information offered to the understanding, or of there being any thing tending to the amendment of the heart. On this point, there ought not to be forgotten, what was referred to in a former commentary, concerning the eloquent bishop of Clermont. When his king said to him, " You always make me dissatisfied with myself," he gave vent to the very feeling, which we ought to endeavour to excite, in a greater or in a less degree, in all our hearers. Of the great mass of them, it must be



evident, beyond the danger of contradiction ; to the best of them also, it is in a measure applicable ; because they have frailties which give cause of humiliation. And even as to the sons and the daughters of despondency, they cannot be made dissatisfied with themselves in any such sense, as shall be inconsistent with their being directed to the highest consolations of the Gospel.

On this point of persuasion, the preacher has a prolific source of encouragement in the topics supplied to him by our holy religion. Christianity has been emphatically called a religion of motives. To mention them in this place, would be to disparage them ; because the display could not be made to an extent adequate to their importance ; without taking up a greater portion of this address than is consistent with a regard to the matters to which it is especially appropriated. It may be proper, however, to remark, that the preacher's topics of persuasion are of a far higher grade than any at the command of speakers in the departments of civil life. Are they armed with arguments, bottomed on the respectable ground of human legislation ? He wields the more potent armour of divine and indispensable requisition. And do they urge the sanction of temporal reward and punishment ? This is common to both ; while he discloses to the view of hope, the bright regions of eternal day ; and denounces to iniquity, the opposite eternal retribution which awaits it. A protecting Providence and an influencing Grace are sources of encouragement open to him ; while there is nothing analogous to them in what relates exclusively to the transactions of the world. A transient observer might suppose, that these mo-

tives must essentially suffer in point of efficacy, from the frequency of repetition. But this is not necessarily the case : For they admit of being so varied in form, according to the different subjects to be sustained by them, that even the habitual preacher, although not having always something new at his command, may so accommodate what is in substance familiar, as to prevent its being an offensive species of repetition.

Although in possession of this very eminent advantage, it must be confessed, that he labours under the disadvantage of a more powerful interest against him, than is usually met with in other departments of public speaking. Take a court of judicature ; and generally, if conviction can be carried to the judgments of the court and of the jury, there is no danger of an undue bias preventing equity in decision. In legislative bodies, there may be a greater proportion of prejudice, and a greater excitement of passion. This, however, does not commonly happen, as to questions in which the very existence of society is at stake. But how great the difference in the line of evangelical persuasion ! The reason is, a counteracting cause in the corruption of the human heart. When Agrippa said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," he laid bare this sore place in our constitution ; and it is the same which was referred to by St. Paul, when he said of human nature, in its unrenewed state :—"The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Here is a formidable enemy to conviction, and much more so to persuasion ; especially, as there can be

no accommodation to his demands, in order to gain him to our interest. Far from this, if the case so require, there are exacted "the cutting off a right hand," and "the plucking out a right eye," meaning in the spiritual sense intended. And under all circumstance, there is to be invariably guarded against "a communion of light with darkness, and of Christ with Belial."

In this, then, there must be acknowledged to exist a powerful resistance of any persuasive talents of the preacher, however eminent; and the reason of its being exhibited, is to show the importance of possessing, as much as possible, a counterpoise to it in the weight of professional and of personal character; the result, as to the former, of its being properly sustained by the person vested with it; and, in regard to the latter, of an opinion entertained of his sincerity; especially of his being above the being suspected of uttering any other than his well-weighed opinions; and what, in his estimation, are conducive to the benefit of his hearers. During a sermon, let but the idea occur to any mind, that it is either composed or delivered with a view to the exhibition of self; and immediately all prospect of persuasion is at an end. The same effect would follow, in a degree, in every other line of publick speaking. But in the ministerial character it goes to the extent, and is irremediable. The like is the result of the hearers' recollecting of any passages of the preacher's private life; amounting to evidence, or what is deemed such, that religion exercises no control, or what is very feeble, over his temper and ordinary conduct. If such a person possess talents either of argument or of persuasion, they may perhaps

excite admiration and applause ; but it must be an extraordinary event indeed, if ever his discourses should so come home to the consciences and to the affections of his hearers, as to excite in them the sensibility of disgust at what he cautions them to avoid, or love of what he exhorts them to pursue.

Thus, there may be perceived in human nature, the ground of a considerable connexion between personal character and persuasive influence. Besides, the same may be supposed to be the result of the high truth of Scripture, that " Paul may plant, and Apollos may water ;" and all to no purpose, unless, " God give the increase." For although, in like manner as God made the mouth of wicked Balaam the vehicle of prophecy, he may make the ministry of other wicked men subservient to the spreading of his blessed Gospel ; yet it is probable, that the influences of his grace will be the most bestowed on the ministry of his faithful pastors ; and that these are they who sow the seed, which " brings forth some thirty fold, and some sixty, and some an hundred."

At the entrance on the subject of persuasion, there was an intimation given, that the word was not to be taken in so limited a sense, as to exclude the motives which result from the consideration of the Divine judgments in a future state of retribution. The sentiment is now reverted to, in order to guard against the danger of a reluctance to present so awful a consideration before the consciences of a congregation. No doubt it must be a sublime motive, which shall elevate to the perfection of Christian virtue ; and we have the authority of an apostle for the position, that " perfect love casteth out fear."

Further: let the acknowledgment be made, that there is a coarse manner of proclaiming the terrors of the Lord, sometimes even marked by vulgarity, which the preacher should be advised rather to avoid than to imitate. Still, there is the extreme, of not proclaiming in the proper place, the woes denounced by the word of God; and in not taking care, that there shall be occasionally, in the course of preaching, a proper opportunity of such denunciation. If the thought should interfere, that the warnings, even properly clothed, are too coarse for the manners of a cultivated auditory; the answer is, that there can be no state of manners dispensing with the opening of the whole counsel of God. It is a part of his dispensation, that he has threatened "tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil." To dwell entirely, or even principally on this awful theme, is to overlook those more persuasive motives of our holy religion, which make it "a drawing with the cords of love." But to consider as useless the other side of the two-edged sword of Scripture, is to make ourselves amenable to that denunciation by the prophet Ezekiel:—"When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked, from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand."

In addition to the sentiments delivered concerning the two objects of preaching, there may be use in something on certain questions, which have equally a reference to both.

One of the questions; and the most material of them, is that of the comparative value of one species

of preaching, called evangelical ; and of another species of it, called moral. If the competition were stated to any intelligent person, a stranger to the circumstances on which it is grounded, yet well instructed in the Christian system ; he would wonder, on the one hand, how there could be evangelical instruction without a comprehension of Christian morals ; and, on the other hand, how there could be Christian morality, not grounded on Christian doctrines. And he would suspect, that the difference were altogether the result of different senses annexed to words. This, however, is not the case : there is a real difference in the matter ; although the existence of the evil sometimes occasions there being taken an advantage of the uncertain use of words ; and a perversion of that advantage to improper purposes.

It is not to be denied, but, on the contrary, is to be deeply lamented, that a considerable portion of the clergy are to be faulted, not only for avoiding subjects which belong exclusively to Revelation ; but even for the treating of other subjects in such a manner, as that they seem very little improved by the additional lights brought to them by Revelation, and by the sanctions with which it sustains them. In short, there are some sermons, both from the press and from the pulpit, in which it would be difficult to discover the intended character of the composition, but for a passage of Scripture under the name of a text, in the beginning ; and perhaps some slight mention of the Saviour of the world, in the conclusion. In some instances, the discourse might serve, if the subject have been ingeniously handled, much better for an essay in a periodical work of moral

instruction, than for an occasion, the object of which is to open and to apply the discoveries of the Divine Spirit, as they are communicated in the word of truth. This species of sermonizing seems to have been introduced by some of the clergy, after the restoration of Charles II., and it has been accounted for from that other species of preaching, very much bordering on Antinomianism, which became fashionable between the putting down of the Church in the reign of Charles I. and its re-establishment under his son—this may account for the opposite extreme, but cannot justify it.

On the other hand, the charge of mere moral preaching is not seldom brought, when it is not well founded. To some ears, nothing short of Calvinism comes under the character of evangelical preaching : while again, to some, a sermon approaches to the proper standard in this respect, in proportion as it has a tendency to excite animal sensibility. In addition, there are some persons who entertain the opinion, that to render a sermon truly evangelical, it should exhibit the whole Christian doctrine in epitome. It is easy to perceive, that according to the last theory, there is not in Scripture a single apostolick address, which answers to the character of a preaching of Christ. Let there be taken, for instance, that of St. Paul, on Mars Hill, at Athens ; or that of the same apostle before Felix ; or that before Festus and king Agrippa ; or that of St. Peter to the Jews, on the day of Pentecost ; or that of the same apostle to Cornelius, with his household and assembled friends ; and it will be found, that there is some leading sense, prompted by the occasion, and not a development so diffusive, as that the

very spirit of the matter, principally intended, must be lost in it. And yet these were occasions, on which the addresser found the hearers utter strangers to the contents of the preached Gospel. Accordingly, the argument drawn from them, applies much more forcibly to the ordinary occasions of addressing audiences, doubtless in some degree informed, although having need for one or for another point to be elucidated or enlarged on, from time to time.

There have been here stated two extremes; and the question occurs—What is the proper medium for a minister, satisfied of the censures due to them respectively? These two directions seem sufficient: first, to preach sufficiently often on prominent doctrines of Revelation; not failing to apply them to moral purposes: and secondly, to preach also on moral duties: but this, under the improved forms of the Christian system, and enforced by its peculiar sanctions. These are important points, and deserve further elucidation.

It was said, that the preacher should discourse sufficiently often, on the prominent doctrines of Revelation. What proportion of his regard these should occupy, cannot be defined; because it must depend partly on the states of different congregations; in some of which certain truths may be more denied or doubted of than in others: but even where there does not exist either denial or doubt, nor yet a defect of information, there will be reason to bring forward such subjects, because of the uses to which they tend. It is one advantage in this Church, that its principal holy days invite to the subjects which they were respectively designed to commemorate: so that they can hardly be overlooked by any minister;



without his giving of cause to suspect the soundness of his faith. If, however, the truths now referred to should never be heard from his lips, except when forced from him by such occasions; there will be reason to fear, that he feels no interest therein; and that, therefore, whatever salutary influence belongs to them, must be lost on him. It was added under this head, that such subjects, when preached on, should be applied to moral purposes. But under these terms, there should be included whatever improves the heart, as well as whatever regulates the conduct. On this point, much ambiguity is the consequence of different ideas, annexed by different people to the same words. Some, under the notion of morality, include nothing beyond the decorum of outward act; which may evidently be free from signal fault, while yet the heart may be the seat of pollution and of unsanctified passion. Such persons do not consider our Lord's sermon on the mount as moral preaching; or the whole of the epistle of St. James as a moral composition; and yet, they contain very little matter to any other purpose. The same may be said of the most of the last four chapters of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, and of parts of some other of his epistles. But it is to be suspected, that such dissatisfied persons are sometimes correct in their charge of fault; and not so in their manner of expressing it: the preaching in question having no tendency beyond decorum of conduct; and on that account called moral preaching, although it is evidently unworthy of the name. It is a pity, that such erroneous apprehensions should be confirmed by any scheme of religious instruction, the end of which may be ac-

complished, consistently with the leaving of the inward man in a sinful state. Let every minister be on his guard against this; and accordingly, in the opening of Christian doctrine, let there be showing its tendency, so far as it is prohibitory, to the unavailing to men of their sinfulness and their imperfection; and so far as it is exhortatory, to the demonstrating to them of the necessity of being "holy, both in body and in spirit."

There was further the advice, to exhibit moral duties under the improved forms of the Christian system. So far as this respects the renovation of the heart, it has been remarked on; but besides, morals, as enjoined in the Gospel, extend beyond what they generally are in the estimation of the world. There is no need to dwell particularly on the forgiveness of injuries, and some other matters, in regard to which Christianity has confessedly superadded to the moral system of the most enlightened of the Heathen sages. There is hardly a duty, the obligation of which is confessed in the abstract, which, in the detail, is not very much weakened by prevalent corrupt opinion. Hence the danger of dwelling too much on general truths, which are shot over the heads of the most egregious delinquents in practice. It is only by following criminal passion into those its more plausible workings in which it is the most likely to escape the censure of the world, perhaps even to gain their approbation, that there can be brought home to the conscience of the delinquent the application, "Thou art the man," to whom the intended admonition is directed.

But it was further remarked, that even in the thus preaching of moral duties, they should be sustained,

by the peculiar sanctions of Revelation. Here it is, that the minister may the most signally entitle himself to the reputation of an evangelical preacher, taking the expression in the proper sense, without subjecting himself to the just censure of entertaining his audience habitually with matters of speculation : thus accommodating himself to that frailty of human nature, which makes some persons more ready to listen to what will gratify their curiosity, than to what will improve their lives and conversation. Although it is not denied, but indeed contended, that doctrinal subjects should in due measure be stated at large, with their proper proofs ; yet, when the truth of them is presumed, and they are brought in aid of the design of producing devout and virtuous sensibilities, the use is no longer speculative, but practical in the most liberal sense of the term, as it carries along with it our best affections. While there is not a single moral duty, but what admits of being enforced in the manner here recommended, it is the only way in which the topicks of enforcement can be so varied, as to prevent the offence of continual repetition. For although fastidiousness at the hearing of the same truths, clothed in nearly the same expressions, is very unreasonable, and a great hindrance of edification : yet, there is a claim for as much variety, as is included in that saying of St. Paul—"I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God."

Another question which may be thought proper to be brought forward is, whether, or if it all, under what limitations, the discourses of a clergyman may manifest his literary attainments ; meaning such as have an evident relation to sacred subjects ; for as to

any other, it will doubtless be acknowledged, that the exhibiting of them is an abuse of the pulpit, as well as an unequivocal evidence of vanity. But there are some branches of human literature, which must be confessed to have a near relation to the opening of the sense of Scripture. Of these there are two sorts, such as may be professedly referred to, and such as may have a less sensible influence on a discourse. Of the former, are the original languages of Scripture, and of history, and antiquities, connected with it. A preacher's availing himself of these helps, is sometimes absolutely necessary for the explaining of a text. But if he will consult popular edification, he will be sparing in this particular; and, having an unlimited choice of subjects, will avoid those which call for a considerable extent of criticism. It is allowable to him to have an additional motive to this, in a wish to avoid the charge of pedantry and ostentation. Some entertain the idea, that a great difference in this respect is to be observed, on account of the various degrees of cultivation of different audiences. But where is the audience, in which there is not a considerable mixture of persons of slender capacities and of scanty information? And are these to be reckoned as cyphers, for the gratifying of the curiosity of some cultivated minds, the possessors of which have probably at least as much need as the others, to be addressed as sinners; and to be incited to duties incumbent on persons of all degrees? There are not here recollected any occasions, on which the hearers may be supposed to be all scholars; except when they are collegiate bodies, or of the clergy. Now, although there may be conceded before either of these, a

greater latitude than before others, as to the point under consideration ; yet even this should have its limits, on account of the immense importance of the plain and practical truths, of which there will be occasion to remind the persons referred to ; and to which the treasures of literature should be made subservient ; if the preacher's being rich in them is a circumstance, which there should be at all occasion to make appear.

In alluding to literary attainment of a more insensible influence, there was especially intended grammar, including correct writing in every particular, and whatever comes under the name of eloquence. In the present improved state of society, there can be no doubt, that a clergyman's paying of due attention to the former, is necessary to elevate him above contempt : and this, not only in the estimation of people who have had the advantage of a liberal education ; but with the less cultivated also, to whom opinion of character descends from those above them. But the less is to be here said of the qualification, because of its being visible in its effects only ; and in such effects as consist rather in the avoiding of fault, than in any positive excellence.

In regard to eloquence, with all the rules which it prescribes, to please and to persuade ; so far as it is a branch of literature, the study of it involves the study of human nature ; and therefore must, in various points of view, be worthy of a Christian minister. Besides, if, for the illustration of its precepts, he were to fix his attention on the best specimens of oratory, in the works of writers whether on sacred subjects or on any other, yet stamped by the approbation of the best judges, through a long tract

of time ; it will not only enable him to distinguish true from spurious eloquence, but help to excite in him all good affections. After this commendation of a knowledge of the subject ; and with the confession, that the mind can hardly be too well instructed in its rules ; there is hazarded the opinion, that a preacher, in his preparation for the pulpit, should have little concern for the arraying of his discourse in the dress of eloquence. If its figures, or any other of its ornaments, should present themselves of their own accord, let them take their proper stations ; but let it not seem, that he has so far lost sight of his proper object, as to go in quest of them. Or if, in his progress, there occur any sentiment addressing itself to the conscience or to any sensibility of the heart, let it be drawn from him by his subject, as a matter spontaneously growing out of his design, rather than as being a part of it. The opinion here expressed, is very much strengthened by what we are told of the early ages of the Church, so far as the present matter is concerned. It is said that within the first two or three centuries, the usual practice of the Christian clergy was, after the prayers, to make a discourse in explanation of some part of Scripture, with an improvement of it ; all in the utmost simplicity of style. We have no remains of these discourses ; but it can hardly be believed, that they were destitute of the species of eloquence, which truths of the highest importance force from the mind, become warmed by them. The eloquence of which they are said to have been destitute, must have been that artificial and studied species of it, which was an imitation of the oratory of the Heathen in their popular assemblies. This became

fashionable in the Church; in the fourth century. But although that age has sent down to ours some splendid specimens of genius, in the works of a Chrysostom, of a Nazianzen, of an Austin, and of others; yet it may be questioned whether what was thus gained in a command over the passions, were not more than counterbalanced by the loss of the more habitual fixture of the affections. We read of the matters at last coming to such a pass, that persons were placed at proper stations, to give signals of sensible applause of the talents of the preacher; and that in this loud testimony, it was expected of the audience to join. Surely, before there could be tolerated such an abuse, there must have been a great falling off from primitive integrity generally. And that this was indeed the case, appears from considerations unconnected with the matter now in hand.

On this subject of pulpit eloquence, there shall be made a remark which may be of use in reading books, written with a view to improvement in that line. The authors of such books naturally illustrate their precepts, by examples from celebrated authors. But the student will have mistaken the aim, if he should imagine that his own invention is to be on the rack, for the inventing of such excellences of discourse. Whenever there is found a blaze of genius of this description, it will appear, on an investigation, to have depended sometimes on adventitious circumstances; and almost always on a preceding train of sentiment, preparing the mind of the speaker for an extraordinary effort and the minds of the hearers to feel the force of it. Hence it is, that a discourse cannot be made up of the brilliant ornaments here in contemplation; and accordingly, where they are

much affected, the probability is, that in their stead there will be meretricious ornaments, not splendid to any eyes besides those of the person who has devised them.

Although eloquence and elocution are in some measure distinct subjects; yet of the former the latter is so much an appendage, that there is taken occasion to say something concerning it.\*

The lowest grade of it, is the speaking distinctly and with propriety. There can hardly be any need to prove, that a minister cannot be too desirous of accomplishing himself in this particular, provided his pains to that effect disappear, and the fruit of them only be discernible in the pulpit. Let him, however, make sure of this measure of elocution, before he permit his ambition to look up to a higher grade of it. For this happens sometimes to young men; and, when happening, can be accounted for only by a fancied perfection in voice and in a command of it; amidst the chains of which, imperfections of a lower degree will hardly be discoverable. If, besides what may be the result of an ordinary share of Nature's gifts, and on application, at the command of every one, the recently ordained orator should possess the gifts especially adapted to the important uses of impressing Christian truths and persuading to Christian duties; surely this his talent ought not to be hid in a napkin; but he is to make the utmost use of it, under the influence of an enlightened zeal and the true spirit of Christian piety. But let the young bird begin with moderate trials

\* The two terms, eloquence and elocution, are variously distinguished by different authors. The latter term, as here used, is confined to diction and attendant action.



of the strength of his wings : and let him not construe early praise into an unequivocal testimony to his merit. Young preachers have, in this very line, been buoyed up by praise ; the result, in some of a false taste, and in others, of a good natural disposition to augur well from what they construed an honourable effort ; when a little time has shown, that both speakers and hearers have mistaken inclination for natural fitness ; and the former have sunk to a level with the mass of their brethren, in respect to the popularity and the praise attached to eloquence. The sentiments here expressed concerning the voice and the management of it, apply exactly to that other branch of elocution, which consists in action. There can be no doubt of the utility of it when discreetly managed, nor of its being contemptible, under any other circumstances. To be used sparingly, may be considered as a property resulting from the nature of the subjects to which it is made an appendage. For if they be such, and handled in such a manner, as suits the pulpit, they are not so full of passion as to require abundant action to sustain it. For instance, if the preacher should, in his zeal, discharge blows on any material object, such as a cushion or a board, such zeal must be disproportioned to the occasions ; unless, in the vehemence of his anger, the discharge on inanimate matter be what he had rather bestow on his hearers, were they within his reach. There can be no doubt, that such a grade of passion would be very ill suited to the duty in which he is engaged. Every one must perceive, that what was said on some other points of leaving behind, on entry into the pulpit, all thought of the preparatory discipline, applies to this

point more than to any other. For let there occur to the hearer, that the attention of the speaker, when he should be alive to the sacred theme of his discourse, is drawn aside to the appearance of his person ; and if he should possess the gifts of a Demosthenes or of a Cicero, they will be lost as to any religious effect to be produced.

We may pass to another question, grounded on the comparative pretensions of different modes of preaching, its being extemporary, or from memory, or from writing. Here again occurs the difficulty of laying down rules which shall apply universally. There can be no doubt, that the first mentioned form has its uses, and these very striking. But if the uses cannot be accomplished without tedious repetitions, or without very verbose amplification, or without palpable errors of diction, the good would seem overbalanced by the evil. The latter may be borne with to some extent, yet this has its limits. If, indeed, we were to conceive what sometimes a preparatory prayer insinuates, that the preacher has reason to trust, for what he is to deliver, to immediate illumination ; this ought to bear down all contrary considerations. But within our communion, it may be taken as a point universally acknowledged, that the discourse, whether extemporary or otherwise, ought to be preceded by study ; and if the preacher is not to make his sacrifice “ of that which hath cost him nothing,” the way in which his labours may be made the most effectual to the end designed, must be to him the way to be preferred. So far as the taste and the feelings of the deliverer of these sentiments are concerned—who, however, does not make them a test for others—the principle here laid down

would remove the greater number of extemporary preachers whom he has happened to hear, from that class to the other of writers of their sermons.

The next mode mentioned, was the delivering from memory. The danger attached to this, is its subjecting both of the mind and of the appearance of the preacher to such constraint, as is unsuitable to the business, in which he is engaged, and cannot fail to be offensive to the hearers. Of the few within recollection who have aimed at this, the manner of almost all was injured by it. And among the objections to this expedient, there is the increasing difficulty, which will be the consequence of an advance in years. It is well known that this will occasion a decline of memory, while the judgment and all the other powers of the intellect may retain their vigour. The only clergyman here known to have derived advantage from it adequate to the pains taken, was the late Rev. Jacob Duché, of the city of Philadelphia. When he began his ministry in Christ Church of that city, his voice, his pronounciation, and his action, were immediately subjects of great commendation; but he had the disadvantage of nearness of sight. In a short time, however, he was observed to lay by, almost entirely, the help of his manuscript; his notice of which, when it happened, became visible to the congregation, as he had to bring his face very near to the cushion on which his sermon lay. This amiable gentleman had a very extraordinary talent for that particular exercise of the memory, to which he was thus incited. There are many still living, who know with what ease he prepared himself in this department. And he has been often heard to acknowledge, that it would have been

generally impossible to him, a few days after the delivery of a sermon, to have recited a single paragraph of its contents. Certain it is, that he manifested no signs in the pulpit, of his being there puzzled in the work of recollection. And this circumstance, added to what has been said of his voice, and the praise due to the correctness of his action, made his delivery exceedingly pleasing. Were this addressed to a young clergyman, known to be possessed of his particular cast of memory and his exterior address—the rare accomplishment of voice may be put out of the question—the advice to such a beginner would be, by all means to deliver himself memoriter. But it is hesitated to make the advice general, for the reasons which have been given.

There remaining only the third mode, and it being that with which, if the sentiments here stated be correct, the great mass of the clergy should be content; let the opinion now delivered be guarded against the being misunderstood, as if intending that they should read their sermons in the same manner as that in which any man would read to a company an unconned book. No—before a clergyman brings a sermon with him into the pulpit, he ought, on grounds irrelative to the present question, to have read over and over what is to be laid before his audience, and to have meditated on it, so as to have his mind possessed of the contents, independently on their being written. When he is thus furnished, his manner will show that he is aware of there being an audience before him, as well as a book under his eye. If the evidence of being interested in what is delivered were attached exclusively to extemporaneous preaching, this ought to be pronounced the only

allowable mean of evangelical instruction. But it is not so, as we learn from records concerning preachers of former days ; and from what may have been seen within our own. In a letter of the celebrated Dean Swift, there are some good remarks on this subject, and great encouragement to the kind of preparation here spoken of. The writer of this, having illustrated a former remark by reference to a late living character, will explain his meaning here, by reference to another. The preacher alluded to, is the late Dr. Smith, who was always heard with satisfaction. He had no uncommon advantage of voice ; and of action, absolutely none. It is true, his sermons were of the first rank, for merit ; but this is sometimes known to happen, without much interest taken in the hearing. This gentleman did not commonly make his sermons familiar to him, in the degree already recommended ; and as may be done, without committing them to memory. Why, then, was he always earnestly attended to ? Besides the acknowledged merit of his compositions, it is not here seen, that there could have been any thing besides the interest, which in the course of the delivery, he was observed to take in the subjects of them.

Under these circumstances, the opinion is decidedly entertained, that the object being not the exhibition of talent, but the accomplishing of the ends of the ecclesiastical ministry, the great majority of the clergy will always be best employed in aiming at perfection, within the verge which has been marked out. All, however, here exacted of a beginner, is his being sure of a competency to this, before his aiming at an higher mark. One danger of the latter, is his ac-

quiring of a species of eloquence and of manner, which will be praised, and even followed for a little while; but which, in a preacher habitually heard, will degenerate to such insipidity, as to produce a general indifference in his hearers. And this will perhaps be imputed by him to a decline of zeal; while it is resolvable into the false glare of apparent merit, which vanishes when the subject of it becomes submitted to a more frequent and a more near inspection.

Perhaps there may be use in saying something on another agitated question—Whether it be allowable in a preacher to deliver the sermons of other men, of which there are so many confessedly excellent given to the publick from the press? Unquestionably, if he be incompetent to the writing of such a discourse as will be acceptable to well informed persons, he had better deliver to them the judicious matter of other men, than to burden them with what is unedifying of his own. But it is doubted, whether such a minister should be left to his own judgment in the choice; and it is rather thought, that the sermons should be prescribed to him, as the Homilies were prescribed at the Reformation, because of the great number of unlettered clergy. But at the same time, let the question occur, Whether such a person should be admitted to the ministry? Under the present improved circumstances of society, it may be thought, except under some very peculiar circumstances, that he should not; because, in general, he can hardly fail to have within his congregation some of better information, who will despise him for his low attainments, and whose contempt will even be imitated by others.

Perhaps it will be asked, why, even supposing the minister possessed of a good understanding, and of a respectable share of literature, may he not avail himself of the labours of men superior to himself? The answer is, that in this case his usefulness will probably be injured. Should he borrow, no doubt his view would be to sermons of considerable merit. In this case, it will fare better with him than it has with many others, if some hearer be not occasionally acquainted with the mine from which he took his ore. Let this be generally known, as in all probability will be the case, and the consequence will be, that his hearers will always conceive of their being addressed by some unknown character, through his mouth: unless, indeed, he deliver a very uninteresting discourse, of which he will be complimented with the reputation of being the author. All this would be the less worthy of consideration, if it were indifferent to the effect of edification. But this is not the case. There may be instruction under such circumstances; but the preacher will hardly interest the affections.

If a clergyman be favoured with an ordinary share of understanding, and an education suitable to his profession, there is required nothing but habit to enable him to commit his sentiments to paper. Doubtless, something more is necessary to his handling of a subject of Christian faith or morals. But of the information necessary for this he should be possessed, independently on the present question. If he is not to bring sacred subjects before his audience in the form suggested by his own understanding, he is without one considerable motive, for revolving such subjects frequently in his mind. There can

be no doubt, that by committing them to paper, and by placing them in the various lights which habitual preaching requires and leads to, he will be much better prepared for stating them in conversation, than he would ever become by mere reading.

But let not this be understood, as a discouragement from the reading of other men's sermons, and especially the best of them, in private, which will have the double use of furnishing with a store of ideas, and the preventing of a false taste. For if there should be perceived by the preacher, that he fancies any characteristics of composition different from those which have stood the test of time, he may be assured that he is in a mistaken track, from which he should make a retreat as soon as possible.

The amount of the whole is this: Let the preacher be well informed on sacred subjects generally: Let him revolve over and over those which he intends to bring with him into the pulpit: Let him form the plan of his sermon in his mind before he ventures to commit it to paper: And then, instead of torturing his invention for novel conceits, and putting his imagination on the stretch for flights of eloquence, let him commit his ideas to paper in a natural order, and in such language as the most easily presents itself; liable however to a review, in order to lop off superfluities, and to conform his periods to his own habits of delivery.

The last remark suggests the propriety of saying something on the subject of the style of a sermon. Perhaps the abhorrence here entertained of affectation, may carry on this point to an extreme; but the opinion to be delivered is, that no man should make style a matter of consideration, any further than



for the prevention of fault. The avoiding of superfluity on the one hand, and of obscurity on the other, the not making of sentences so long as to render the reading of them difficult, nor so short as to give an air of stiffness, these and other faults may be guarded against, while yet the writer may retain his natural manner of expressing himself; and in this there will always be some degree of variety, accommodated to variety of sentiment and of feeling among men. The subject may be illustrated by a comparison. Different men have different gaits, in their respective customary walking. But any man may be conscious of such inattention, as must endanger his person, and this he may endeavour to correct, without affecting the air and carriage of another. It would seem, that in like manner, a writer may be so far attentive to the construction of his sentences, as to make them not disagreeable to the ear, without wishing to attain to any particular character of style. The aiming at this has sometimes rendered a writer contemptible. And perhaps it never fails to render his matter less effective than it would have proved in his own natural manner; which always partakes in some degree of personal character, and must be on that account the more impressive.

There shall be concluded the whole subject of preaching, with an article of advice; applying to it in every point of view, in which it has been, or can be exhibited. The advice is, that a preacher remark carefully the difference between the expedients which arrest popular attention for a while, but are interesting no longer than during their being novel; and such solid and judicious means, as continue to be satisfactory. In the saying of this, there is alto-

gether put out of view, the gratification of vanity ; which is an object not to be entertained, and therefore not worthy of advice, to favour the accomplishment of it. But a clergyman, wishing to catch the ear of the people, with a view to religious cultivation, may adopt for the purpose some of the expedients, against which there is here put in a caution. Let him be assured, that they are base metal, which will pass for coin, no longer than until the washing off the surface. And this will sooner happen to his well intended but mistaken artifices, than to the material to which they are here compared.

## *2. Of Officiating in the Publick Service of the Church.*

This is made one of the principal divisions, rather because of its importance, than on account of any multiplicity of remarks which it can give occasion to. In truth, they must be comparatively few, in a department in which so little is left to the discretion of the officiating minister. It is trusted, however, that there is importance attached to the matters which are to be brought forward.

It would be a great mistake, to suppose that there is so definite a line drawn between preaching and publick prayer, as that this does not partake of the properties of the other. Far from it, there can hardly be a more effectual way of holding up to the minds of a congregation the truths of Christianity, than through the medium of their being comprehended in rational and evangelical services of devotion. It is not here meant, that such services should have a relation to the many controversies agitated within the bounds of the Christian Church. But the doc-

trines which distinguish her as Christian, should surely be comprehended. It would be foreign to the present design, to undertake to show, what is here however presumed to be the fact, that our different services have observed the proper medium in this respect. There is no small evidence of the truth of the remark, in the commendations bestowed on the liturgy, by intelligent persons of different denominations; among whom, there being a prescribed liturgy is held to be inconsistent with Christian liberty. Of the many advantages of an authoritative form, this is not the least, that it preaches the Gospel to the people, when they would look for it in vain from the officiating minister: who may strictly avoid whatever can be supposed to offend against the doctrine of his Church; and yet, in his discourses, show very little influence of that doctrine, or of the holy morality which derives from the same source all its life and spirit. There can hardly be occasion to prove, that in the estimation of a well-informed audience, the character of a minister must needs sustain a great disparagement, when there come from him, in the desk, truths presumed to be of great importance; while, of the same truths, little or nothing is heard from him in the pulpit. On this account, our Church may be esteemed happy in a medium of communication, of which it is not in his power to deprive them. In addition to this, the reading of the Scriptures in our churches, more constantly, and in a greater measure than is done in any other communion, contributes much to the use here adverted to, of a preaching of the Gospel to the people, independent on the will or the character of the officiating minister.

If the opinion here delivered be correct, there

follows undeniably the inference, that every serious clergyman of our Church, independently on the promises made by him of conformity to the liturgy, ought to be careful not to contribute to the pulling down of this venerable enclosure of our orthodoxy, by substituting any of the practices with which that sacred property of it may seem unconnected ; because, let the principle be once admitted, that individual opinion or taste may exercise itself in this way, and immediately, the opinion or the taste of any one man is not to be a rule for that of any other. In short, the whole will be at the mercy of caprice.

Opinion and taste have been here mentioned, as sources of deviation ; and so they are, although of deviation of different description. When we hear of a minister's abbreviating of the appointed service, and of his being copious in that unappointed if permitted part, in which his own conceptions are brought forward ; we may perceive plainly enough, that he considers the whole of the former as needless trammels on him, however he may partially conform to it for the sake of decorum to his engagements ; or perhaps from being aware, that a proportion of his hearers entertain a predilection for the Church into which he has intruded. What then is the source of the freedom taken ? Before an answer to this question, let it be remembered, that the person in question is destitute of all right to the old plea, of the sin of submission to an asserted authority of the Church to decree rights and ceremonies. That plea was founded on a prejudice, which has been conscientiously entertained by some ; and it is not intended to say any thing here on the controversy between them and us. But the subject has no relation

to a man who has promised conformity to our twentieth article, provided he have a particle of integrity. Still the question occurs—What is the cause of his irregularity? It is here taken to be in substance this: he is possessed by the idea of such a degree of animal sensibility in the act of prayer; as will not consist with the spirit and with the language of the prayers of the Church. There is not one of them with which it is less compatible than with the Lord's Prayer, which she has taken from the Scriptures; and indeed the same may be said of any of the prayers therein found. Hence it is, with ministers of the description here stated, that they will be found, after the most vehement passion and action during their own unpremeditated prayers, when they come to the Lord's Prayer at the conclusion, to sink to temperance, if not to apparent indifference in their manner: for even the last has in some instances been remarked. The truth is, that neither any prayers in Scripture, nor our Church prayers, breathe a spirit in unison with that of a wild enthusiasm. And here is the secret of their motive for disengaging themselves from the latter, as much as decency permits.

But there was intimated another source of deviation originating in taste, or the party's opinion of his own judgment in agreeable or correct writing. Under this head, there may be brought all the changes which some ministers suppose to be allowable, under the idea, that one or another matter may be more happily expressed, than as found in the service. Now, a minister, taking such liberties, either is correct in his criticisms, or he is not. In the former case, why does he not consider, that ill chosen

language, in a few instances, supposing it to exist, had better be endured, than a license which has a tendency to destroy all order? In the other part of the alternative, which has been known to happen in several instances, he evidently goes out of his way, to make absurdity chargeable at his door; while he supposes himself to have accomplished an improvement. According to the ideas here entertained, all license of this sort is the effect of vanity. Certain it is, that where the object of a minister is the exhibition of himself, whatever merit there may be either in the matter or in the expression of our prayers, none of it is ascribable to him. But, says he to himself, there occurs an opportunity of showing, how much the liturgy is susceptible of improvement from my talents for criticism. It is here believed, that a clergyman is always more or less lowered in estimation, by the fault which has been noticed. They whose information is unequal to the question of the merits of his criticism, think the service good enough without his mendings: and they of a higher description do not think this a ground, on which he should seek literary reputation by a breach of order. Let it be remembered, that these sentiments are inapplicable to any questions which may arise on a constitutional review of the service; but such a measure will never be worth the sacrifice of personal convenience, which it exacts of those who may be employed in it, if their labours are to be re-judged and rendered inefficient by every vain sciolist who may imagine himself more competent to the work.

There has been noticed the fault of abridging the prescribed service, for the free indulgence of ranting prayers in the pulpit. But it is a less fault than the

incongruous one, of a ranting manner of using the prescribed form. This has been sometimes done; although, as is here supposed, and for a reason given, very seldom. But there is another and a very different fault, that of affecting an oratorical and, in some cases, even a theatrical manner in the prayers. Every person in the habit of hearing sermons from different preachers, must have occasionally been disgusted with the very affected airs, which, in the ordinary intercourses of society, denominate a man a coxcomb. It is much to be lamented, that such a person should have become of the body of the clergy; and more so, that he should bring his natural character into the pulpit; but most of all, that he should not forget it in the desk; where it is not in his power to accommodate the sense to the attendant manner. There are some people who have attained to so much of the Christian character, as to join in the prayers with a minister who gives them but little satisfaction either in the pulpit or in his life and conversation; but it is to be feared there are very few, although it must be confessed a still higher grade of attainment, who can accompany him with devout affections, while they consider the service as undergoing a solemn mockery, in the manner of the performance. If it were ever proper to disturb a religious society by sighs and groans, this would seem to be the occasion for them. It is certainly the abuse, the counteracting of which, by abstracting the sense of the service from the demerits of the reader, is the least in the power of the godly hearer.

Of the faulty readers which have been referred to, there is at least this to be commonly said, that they have taken some pains to shine in the service;

however unworthy the motive, and however unsuccessful the result. But this does not excuse an opposite indifference and carelessness, in performing the high duty of leading the prayers of a congregation. The character of the others has vanity for its principal feature. This, however, such is the variety in the human character, is occasionally found with some conviction of the truths of religion, and perhaps some zeal in its cause; although not operating consistently. But of the fault here noticed, there is reason to apprehend, that it is the mark of a person seldom, perhaps never, engaged in the different exercises of worship, mentally. And this leads to the other suspicion, that, with the person supposed, the ministry stands on the same footing with that of any ordinary occupation, which is engaged in for support; while every thing that can interest the affections is looked for to some other quarter. To a man of such a stamp, there cannot be addressed any particular exhortation, but such as should go to a total change of the inward cast of character.

It is rather to be hoped, that every minister, before whom these remarks are to come, has entered on his office with an interest taken in its duties; and particularly in that department of duty, to which there belongs the proper reading of the publick prayers. Now, as there have been known some, who, at their entrance on the ministry, have aimed at the highest grade of oratory in the pulpit, while they have manifested, in the desk, an incompetency to correct reading, and sometimes such vicious pronunciation as a sensible school-mistress would not endure, in scholars advanced beyond their spelling-books; there may be use in the hint here offered, of



not neglecting the more humble attainment, from ambition to reach that which makes a greater figure before the world. The minister is not advised to hide his talent, whatever it may be, in a napkin. But perhaps he may have mistaken his talent; and therefore let him try it in the humble department, before he test it in the higher. Correct reading is within the compass of the endeavours of the mass of those who have competent information for the ministry. Some people, indeed, have such imperfect organs of pronunciation, that they can never be tolerable as readers, either in publick or in private. It is a pity on their own account, as well as on that of the Church, that such should have made choice of the ministry for their profession. But if a man be possessed of a voice sufficient, with proper management, to be heard over churches of the ordinary size, and of powers of utterance of the ordinary standard, he may be supposed capable of attaining to a proper and edifying reading of the Common Prayer.

All that has been here said, for the keeping of ambition within the bounds of natural qualification, is no more than the applying to the present subject of the precept of Horace on that of poetry: "*Sumite materiam vestris qui scribitis æquam viribus.*"

Even if a man possess powers of a higher grade than that above supposed, and display them in the pulpit, he should be earnestly cautioned against the introduction of his impassioned eloquence into the desk; because not suited to what is there to be recited. The best reading of any part of our service ever witnessed by the writer of this, was by the Reverend George Whitefield, in the administration

of the communion. It was the only time the writer ever heard him read ; although he has heard him several times from the pulpit. Here, his voice and his action were at times very highly impassioned ; yet not more so than agreed with the sense of what he said. But there was not a particle of that kind of elocution, at the Lord's table. The writer never, in any profession, met with a speaker who had so many pleasing tones in the modulation of his voice ; which was also, in itself very pleasing. If he had ever diligently studied to attain to the art of speaking well ; never was any man happier, in avoiding all appearance of art in his delivery.

The next best reader of the prayers, within the sphere of the acquaintance of the present writer, was a gentleman already mentioned under the head of preaching, the Reverend Mr. Duché. He was perhaps not inferior to Mr. Whitefield in the correctness of his pronunciation. His voice was remarkably sweet ; although short of the voice of the other gentleman, in the compass of its powers, and especially in modulation. Mr. Duché was frequently oratorical in his sermons, but never so in the reading of the prayers ; although always read by him with signs of unaffected seriousness and devotion. There have been cited the examples of these two gentlemen ; because, being of acknowledged celebrity in the department of elocution, the publick approbation of them may be proof, that the proper exercise of this gift is not precisely the same in the desk as in the pulpit. And yet it does not follow, that there is less endeavour to be used for accomplishment as to the former.

In truth, there should be earnestly recommended

a frequent and attentive reading of the Common Prayer in private, with a view to the proper reading of it in publick ; particularly in regard to the pronunciation of words, the emphasis, the modulation of the voice, and the medium to be observed between an utterance too slow or too rapid. There are some other matters of minor importance ; but the above being the principal, each of them shall be remarked on.

In regard to the pronunciation of words ; although there seems to have taken place, within memory, many useless and capricious changes, according to the successions of fashionable standards ; yet there may be given, as to this point, precisely the advice which the giver of it has been accustomed to offer to young persons, as to the article of dress. The advice has been, that in regard to the cut of a coat or of a gown, they should appear like the rest of the world ; but that as to the changes taking place, they should not make themselves remarkable, either for an early adoption of a fashion, or for going to the extreme of it. Of late years, there has been a succession of writers, each of whom has claimed the merit of devising principles, which should give a new cast to the popular pronunciation. They have also had the good fortune to acquire a considerable degree of approbation. No doubt there will be other claims, with the like success. The proper line of conduct, is to take the present standard, whatever it may be. This is not meant to discourage the minister's study of language, as a branch of science ; and particularly the structure of his vernacular language. But whatever may be his opinions in his study, let him, in practice, take his tone

from society ; that is, from the more cultivated part of it. This can hardly bring him under the censure of "following the multitude to do evil ;" but comes rather under the apostolick advice, of "becoming all things to all men," for a beneficial purpose.

The importance of attending to emphasis, is conspicuous in the circumstance of its being essential to the sense of the service, as to that of every other composition. Particular parts of the service might be mentioned, in which a false emphasis gives a foreign, and sometimes even a ludicrous sense to the expressions. Some readers, having been told of the importance of emphasis, and being desirous of coming up to the height of what is required of them in this particular, lay a stress on so many words, as that, after all, the emphasis of the leading word cannot be sufficiently distinguished. Every one must perceive, that this is an improper application of a correct rule ; but however preposterous the abuse, it ought not to discourage a due attention to the subject, and the application to it of the principles of good sense ; which, if permitted to govern, will ensure propriety in this particular.

The proper modulating of the voice, is a matter which, like emphasis, falls within the province of good sense : with this important difference, however, in the subjects, that whereas, in the one of them there is an easy execution of what the judgment may ordain, it is not so in the other ; the execution depending here on the formation of the organs of articulation. To this may be imputed an unhappy mistake made by some readers, in attempting a variety of modulation, to which their powers are incompetent. Their imaginations describe to them de-

degrees of excellence, which they are desirous of attaining to ; but in attempting this, they pass from the solemn to the familiar, and in other instances, from one tone to another, in so abrupt a manner as gives a grotesque appearance to the performance. And this, if the conjecture offered be correct, proceeds from their having of a worthy end in view, without an endowment of nature adequate to the accomplishment of it. This is mentioned, not to discourage the acquiring of the art of modulation, for nothing is more calculated to fatigue the attention, than a continued monotony, but only to temper the endeavour with the caution, of accommodating it to the extent of natural gift. This is different in different persons ; and the diversity ought not to be disregarded, in the art of reading.

The last particular mentioned, was a proper medium between a too fast and a too slow pronunciation. Now, although the first is by far the more common fault ; and, as the present writer has found by experience, very difficult to be corrected ; yet, the opposite extreme is a fault also. The proper medium is to be attempted ; but this, under the recollection, that what is such to one man, may not be so to another : for if he whose natural manner is quick, should carry his corrections too far, he would probably sink into a drawl ; while, if the like were done by the person, whose utterance is naturally too slow, he would probably crowd his words together in a way which would prevent their being distinctly heard. The difficulty is the greater, if it be, as is here suspected, that hearers are differently constituted, in regard to what gives them pleasure or pain, in this particular. What is said may be illustrated by the

following statement. In the year 1771, the present writer had the good fortune of hearing those two great men, the Lords Mansfield and Camden, in the British House of Peers, speaking in a legal cause then before the house, in the capacity of a final court of appeal. The two Lords mentioned, were on the same side of the question : for it was remarkable of them, that they seldom agreed on political questions, and that they as seldom differed on the legal. The cause related to the succession to a title and an estate ; and was well known under the name of the Anglesea cause. Their accidental hearer was of course incompetent to enter into the legal merits of it ; and was even uninformed of the circumstances of the case. Accordingly, the only objects of his attention were the elocution of the respective speakers. One prominent property of the manner of Lord Mansfield was, it being so deliberate, as that every word seemed to have been well weighed before the utterance of it ; while yet, there was not a degenerating into tediousness. On the other hand, Lord Camden had a volubility of manner, which was not carried so far as to prevent his being intelligible. Had it been in the power of the hearer to have made the manner of either of these great men his own, he thinks he should have chosen Camden's ; and yet, of the two, Mansfield has been the most celebrated as a speaker. This is consistent with the opinion already expressed, that we have not all the same standard of perfection, in the particular under notice. The result of the whole is, that the proper medium is to be obtained as far as possible. When we hear a speaker, whose pronunciation is much too fast for us, finding that we cannot follow him in his

train of sentiment, we give over the attempt. In the case of too slow a speaker, we find ourselves continually disappointed by the delay ; and, in consequence, our attention wanders to some other subject of contemplation. At least, this takes place with him who now records it, and he supposes it to be so with others ; although there may be different degrees of slowness, at which our respective tedium begins.

On the extensive subject in hand, there have been selected but a few points ; and there has been said but little in regard to them : and the only use is to show, that the due reading of the service deserves to be made an object of serious care and attention. It is to the advantage of the present day, that there are many helps in the approved works of ingenious men. Nevertheless, whatever pains a minister may bestow in thinking or reading on the subject, it is requested of him most earnestly, that, on entering the desk, he will leave behind him all direct attention to his rules. It is in this line, as it is in that of morals. In the latter, if a man have habituated himself to act correctly, and from proper motives, he will continue his course of conduct as occasions may occur, without thinking of the principles which influence him. With the same ease, a reader should be correct, without thinking continually of the principles by which correctness is constituted. The act of prayer is of too high a nature to suffer the attention to be drawn aside to any reflections, alien from the sentiments which have a relation to the adorable object of the duty. There were mentioned two clergymen, remarkable for their agreeable reading of the prayers. In neither of them was there

any thing which could have led the hearers to suppose, that, in the act of reading, their minds were at all occupied by concern as to the manner of performing it. Had that been visible, it would doubtless have very much detracted from their excellence, in the estimation of a critick; and perhaps have destroyed it entirely, as to the religious effect of inspiring or of increasing devotion.

Before the leaving of the present branch of the subject, there may be a use in saying something concerning that interesting part of the publick service which is sung. In the performance of this, the minister does not take the lead; while yet it is subjected to his control. Many of the psalms introduced into the morning and evening prayer, were intended to be sung, although they may be said also: and indeed, the same may be remarked of the whole book of psalms; which, as it stands in the Prayer Book, is pointed with a view to its being sung. Besides this, anthems, taken from Scripture, may be introduced by the minister into the service, without the imputation of irregularity. Further, the metre psalms and hymns are especially supposed, in the rubrick before them, to be sung after morning and evening prayer, under the direction of the minister. For these reasons, it is judged that the present is the proper place for noticing the department. We are on the subject of the reading of the prayers; and this is an adjunct of it.

Devotional singing may be divided into two species: that which, requiring a more than ordinary skill, is expected to be performed by select persons, especially well informed and practised in the art; and that which may be accomplished by the con-



siderably greater part of an ordinary congregation. Under the former head, may be contemplated what the Church intends by the name of anthems: under the latter, both chanting and the singing of compositions in metre, whether psalms or hymns.

On the question of the comparative merit of the first and of the third species of singing, there have occurred, according to the apprehension here entertained, opposite extremes. Some would banish whatever comes under the name of anthem, while others avow their hostility to singing in metre. Let there be estimated the weight of each of these opinions.

The present writer, having never met with the first of them in England, and perceiving no tenable principle on which it can be grounded, believes it to have been owing, in this country, to the ill-judged, and, in some cases, most indecent manner in which the practice has been introduced. We are all aware of the association of ideas. Now, there are many serious people, who cannot disconnect the idea of an anthem from the supposition, that the religious exercises for which the people are assembled are suspended, for the amusement of a few persons versed in the theory of musick, or perhaps only ambitious of being thought so; and who must be indulged in this relaxation from the irksomeness of listening to services and a sermon, in which they feel no interest. The plea is certainly palliated by the circumstance, that almost all the attempts here known to introduce this higher grade of singing, have been exactly such as were calculated to produce the dissatisfaction. The use to be made of the fact is, on the one hand, to bar the application of the abuse to

the unqualified prohibition of that of which it is a profanation ; and, on the other hand, to insist on the impropriety of allowing the thing itself, without a strong presumption that it will not be so abused ; such presumption to arise from a satisfactory knowledge of the characters of the performers, of their musical sufficiency, and of their being well trained to their respective parts, before their exhibiting of themselves in publick.

As to the singing of poetry in metre, they who entertain a dislike of it in the Church of England have this to say, that it is not known either in the rubricks, or in the canons of that Church ; the version of Sternhold and Hopkins having been introduced without any publick sanction, soon after the Reformation : and the latter edition of Tate and Brady having been allowed by government, without any other ecclesiastical sanction than that of the Bishop of London of the day. So far is the latter version from being considered as clothed with authority, that, to this time, they have continued to use the former in a great proportion, probably in the greater number of the parochial churches, and in the cathedrals ; and yet, it is confessedly destitute of publick sanction. But is there not, in all this, considerable evidence that the said species of singing, in which the people could the most easily join, was found so conducive to devotion, as that the provision for such an end was suffered to come in silently, from a conviction of its utility ? And as for there not being an ecclesiastical sanction in the Church of England, it is a circumstance irrelevant to the case of the Church in this country, which has permitted the psalms and the hymns in metre to be used after

morning and evening prayer, and otherwise, at the discretion of the minister. There is something so agreeable to the mind in the idea of a general act of praise, adorned by poetry and musick, and sent up to the Eternal throne by a large assembly of Christian people; and, at the same time, it seems so natural a mean of increasing devotion, than an abridgment of this branch of publick worship would be an event to be deplored.

But why should there be such a prejudice against metre, when the learned are of opinion, that at least great proportions of the books of the prophets and of the book of psalms were originally in this dress? Bishop Lowth has taken much pains, and it has been thought with considerable effect, to reduce the prophecy of Isaiah to its original metre. And if the principle thus proceeded on be correct, it is not improbable, that the psalms sung in those devotions of the Jewish Church which our Lord and his apostles attended, were in the metrical form.

But it is said, that at a certain period of the Christian Church there was a discouragement of metrical compositions, on the principle that they savoured of the levity of Gentile worship. That there is necessarily levity attached to metre, may be denied: and the mere circumstance of its being used by the Heathen will not, it is to be hoped, find admittance into the Church to effect a prohibition, any more than that of the use of some of her prayers by the Roman Catholicks; which has been seriously, but indiscreetly objected to her.

Of metre, rhyme is not an essential circumstance. Nevertheless, if this artificial accommodation to the ear be peculiarly suited to the genius of our lan-

guage—a point maintained by very able judges—there seems no reason why we should decline this or any other help, to the rendering of the clothing of religious sentiment agreeable and captivating. There are, however, some of the sacred compositions so stately, and others of them so full of tender passion, that rhyme has the effect of lessening the simplicity of the one and the dignity of the other. Of the first description, there may be mentioned the fiftieth psalm, beginning—"The Lord, even the most mighty God, hath spoken." Of the second, the fifty-first psalm may be mentioned, beginning—"Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness;" the solemnity of which is exceedingly sunk by the short metre of Tate and Brady, however commendable their translation: for it is here thought to be so generally. There shall also be mentioned in this place the hundred and thirty-seventh psalm, beginning—"By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Sion." Of the psalms mentioned, it is here conceived, that Alexander Pope, master as he was of numbers, and friend as he was to rhyme, could not have imposed its shackles on them, without its being for the worse. We may the easier believe this, if we conceive of some poet putting into rhyme Milton's Morning Hymn; or his description of the Almighty, marking out from the immensity of space, the part of it which was thenceforward to be occupied by our system. To attempt to dignify such passages by rhyme, is to disparage them.

Notwithstanding this, and with the wish that a few of the psalms were in blank verse, yet with the caution that none but a consummate master should

attempt it, there is felt a reluctance to part with rhyme—much more with metre.

On the subject of the singing part of the service, this is the proper place of admonishing a newly ordained minister, not to endure the indecencies, which are sometimes obtruded on congregations by persons who take the lead in the department. The abuse thus noticed might be set in various points of view, all of them aggravating the odium of it. But it shall be here considered only in relation to the injury done by it to our communion. Persons sometimes leave it on the professed principle, that they do not perceive a sufficient degree of seriousness in its members. The principle is indefensible: but ought not we to apply to ourselves the intimation—"Wo be to him by whom the offence cometh?" Again, a person of another communion enters one of our churches in which such levity is practised. He knows, that we boast of the excellency of our Common Prayer; but the reading of it comes to him under the weight of a prejudice, created by what is contrary to all decency and common sense. He says to himself something which carries the meaning, that "we have no oil in our lamps"—that we have no real piety; however, from a vague sense of obligation, or from hereditary habit, we may deem it expedient to keep up the forms of worship. Such a person, were he informed of the whole truth, would know, that at the very moment of the censured impropriety, there are many devout persons mourning over it in secret; and that of those who are not devout, at least the majority blame and despise the incongruity. And why has it been at all endured? The answer is—for the gratification of a

few ungodly persons: an assertion, which should not have been hazarded by the present writer, had he ever known a single devout person among the practisers or the favourers of what is here blamed. He cannot follow them to their closets: he cannot look into their hearts: but he can declare, with truth, that he never knew an individual of them, who denoted, either by deportment or by profession, that he worshipped God in publick or in private.

Under the head of the ordinary publick service of the Church, there falls that most solemn part of it—the administration of the holy communion. For although not administered on all the occasions of assembling for publick worship, yet it may be administered on any of them. Its being attended to in our churches only monthly, and on the three principal festivals, is one of the many proofs existing, that the piety of Christians is not so ardent as in the beginning. There are few facts more satisfactorily proved, than that of the eucharist having been administered in the primitive Church every Lord's day. Accordingly, it seems utterly unaccountable, that in some religious societies, in which it is administered seldomer than among us, they even censure the administering of it more frequently than is customary among themselves; and hold it to be contrary to godly discipline.

Although solemnity and decency are doubtless called for, by every branch of ecclesiastical administration, yet there is no one, in which any thing contrary to these dictates alike of reason and of piety, would be so apt to inflict wounds on devout minds, or indeed so much argue the absence of devotion from the mind of the minister. Accordingly he is

exhorted, not indeed to that holy affection, which it would be dangerous to represent as exclusively attached to the part of the service now in question; but to be especially guarded against any irregularity, into which he might otherwise be drawn in this respect.

As to the considerations which should govern in the reading of the communion service, what has been said already, applies here of course. There should, therefore, be dispensed with any further attention to the department; were it not, that there may be use in stating to a newly ordained minister, the grounds of a transaction which passed in this Church during the organizing of it; and further, in putting him on his guard against what is considered as an error avowed by a few individuals, since the period referred to; perhaps, merely from the not being aware of the consequences to which the error points; and of the feuds to which, if pressed, it would give occasion.

It must be known to every reader of the ecclesiastical history of England, that on the second setting forth of the liturgy in the reign of Edward VI. there were made two alterations of some moment, in the prayer of consecration of the eucharistick elements. In the first liturgy, there had been an oblation of the bread and the wine, as commemorative of the body and the blood of Christ; and an invocation of the Divine blessing on these elements, for their being sanctified to their proper end: but on the said review, these particulars were omitted. It is also well known, that the changes have been imputed to the influence of two learned foreigners—Peter Martyr and Martin Bucer, who were fugitives

from the persecutions in Germany ; and had been honourably provided for by the British government, in the universities. From the best information to be gathered, it is here thought, that considering the unobtrusive characters of those two men, however free to give their opinions, when asked for ; and considering further the great learning and the independent spirits of Archbishop Cranmer and his associates ; the latter must have entertained the opinion, that the parts of the service in question were not essential to the ordinance ; and that having been much abused by superstition, they were best dispensed with. That the English reformers thought them superstitious in themselves ought not to be believed, because no evidence of it appears.

But whatever may have been the cause of this revolution, it has been lamented by a great proportion of the best informed clergy of the Church of England ; who have ardently wished for a restoration of what had been left out, at the time alluded to. Hence it happened, that when a liturgy was provided, in the reign of Charles I. for the established Church of Scotland, at that time Episcopal ; they who had the direction of the business, of whom the principal was Archbishop Laud, took care to insert what they thought to have been unnecessarily omitted among themselves. The parts so restored were handed down in the Episcopal Church of Scotland, after it ceased to be an establishment. And there is no part of the service, to which the clergy of that Church are more attached. For there is here reason to think, that the matters in question are not uncommonly considered among them, as essential to the sacramental act.



There can be no doubt, that the two particulars in question were in the form for the consecration of the elements, at a period within the first three centuries. This may especially be proved, from what are called the apostolick constitutions : and although it is not a necessary inference that they were in use within the age of the apostles, yet even this may be thought probable ; while, that they preceded any corruption of Christian doctrine, seems absolutely certain. That they are not in themselves a corruption of the doctrine, but, on the contrary, in analogy with it, is here thought to arise clearly from an attention to the subject. The oblatory clause has been the most objected to ; and yet it is in harmony with the original institution by our Lord. What was to be done in remembrance of him, was to be in a religious act ; and, therefore, as the bread and the wine were significative of his body and of his blood ; what could have been more natural, than to present them in such an act of devotion, as the emblems so attached to the great object represented ? In the remains of the Roman Clement, we read expressly of the making of oblations, as a part of the office of the clergy ; and surely no one will allege, that there was superstition in his day in the Roman Church. That sentiments of this sort were subsequently made the foundation of superstition, must be conceded. But if this argument have any weight, it goes to the extent of giving up the eucharist altogether ; because the whole subject of it is of such a nature, as exposes it to the danger of abuse. Be it remembered, that the matter is not here contended for so far, as to affirm the oblatory words to be essential to the

commemorative eating of bread and wine. They are, however, advocated, not only as defensible, but as impressive and edifying. It would be another thing, were the elements spoken of as comprehending more than what is discernible by our senses. But the contrary is taught by their being called—"These thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine:" and the words are after the oblation; which therefore could never have been conceived of, as effecting any change.

As to the other branch of the subject, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, not on ourselves only, for that is in the English service, but as sanctifying the bread and the wine, to their religious application; it is no more than similar to what is done in our baptismal offices, when we implore God to "sanctify the element of water to the mystical washing away of sin." This has never been faulted; and yet, why it should be thought allowable in the one case, and superstitious in the other, would be difficult to be shown.

But while, it is hoped, that an improvement, adopted on such good grounds, and on such mature consideration, will be perpetual in this Church; there is deprecated the adoption of ideas, which have been sometimes expressed by individuals, of there being in the eucharist a sacrifice, an altar, and a priest, in the strict and proper meaning of the words; and taking the last word in the Jewish sense of it. That in England, every thing of this sort was designedly dropped at the Reformation, cannot be denied. The word "priest" is "Πρεσβυτερος," with an English termination; and not the "Ιερευς," of the Jewish Church; and that it was

so understood by the reformers, is evident from their Latin liturgy ; which has always “ presbyter,” and not “ sacerdos.” As to “ altar,” we have not only “ table” in its stead, throughout the rubricks ; but it is well known, with what marked attention to the distinction, they who took the lead in that day changed the altars then existing, into tables. Bishop Ridley’s conduct was especially conspicuous, relative to the subject, when he began his reformation of the matter, in the cathedral of the metropolis. Of “ sacrifice” there is no mention, except in a sense evidently figurative ; where, in the consecration prayer, in reference to the celebration then going on, we desire the acceptance of this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.” In the time of Charles I., Archbishop Laud has been supposed to have manifested an inclination to resume what had been relinquished by the reformers. Not that it is here imagined to have been his intention—whatever his enemies urged to the effect—to accomplish a return of the Church of England to the Roman Catholic communion. Notwithstanding this, some innovations made by him, connected with the administration of the eucharist, are more in harmony with the errors of that Church, than with the doctrine of his own ; and the said measures of the Archbishop are here thought to have been one of the principal causes of the temporary overthrow of the Church of England, which took place in his day ; and of which he was himself a victim. But be these things as they may, that Church stands at present on its original foundation, as to the points stated. Our Church has taken them as there found ; and it is to be hoped, that the purity of both, in respect to them, will be retained.

From time to time, indeed, there have appeared in the English Church some respectable divines, who have manifested a leaning to the ancient errors. It has not, so far as is here known, been found on the Episcopal bench. Nevertheless, its having appeared in that Church, should make us the more jealous of it, if it should lift up its head among ourselves.

There would be a mistake in supposing, that in what has been said concerning sacrifice and altar, a censure is designed on the figurative use of the words, which may occasionally be made to the advantage of discourse, and without danger of misleading any. The word "priest," let it be again remarked, is the same as "presbyter;" although, whether it would not have been better, because more unequivocal, to have taken this word, the former being also used as the translation of "*ἱερεύς*," and of sacerdos," may be made a question.

There may be propriety in noticing further, that the favourers of the theory here objected to justly find fault with the practice prevailing both in England and in America, of placing the bread and the wine on the sacramental table before the beginning of the service. This is contrary to the rubrick, which directs it to be placed there by the priest, immediately before the prayer for the Church militant. This must have been in imitation of the primitive Church; in which there was a prothesis or side table, for the previous reception of the elements. The priest's removing of them to the Lord's table was considered as an official act. It is not agreeable to the present writer's habits of thinking, to lay too much stress on matters of order; but as the provision now noticed was designed to be an act of

devotion, although not accompanied by words, he wishes for the restoration of it, by the reducing of practice to the existing rule. This would also have the good effect of manifesting to those, if there be any, who cannot be complied with to the extent desired by them, that there is compliance, as far as good reason for it can be shown.

### 3. *Of Ministering in the Offices.*

The design relative to the ordinary service is finished ; and there is now a transition to the third department, comprehending what are called the Offices of the Church. It will not extend to a proof of the duties, to which the offices respectively appertain ; but will be merely a suggesting of considerations, arising out of the existing circumstances of the Church.

The first offices, in the order of the Book of Common Prayer, are the Baptismal—the office for the publick baptism of infants ; that for the private baptism of the same ; and that for the baptism of adults. It is impossible to attend to the first two, without perceiving the inconsistency between the rubricks and the present universal practice of the clergy. According to the rubricks, there should be no private baptism except in the case of sickness, endangering the life of the child. Under such a circumstance, the rite is to be performed without the sign of the cross, and without the engagements of the sponsors ; which are reserved to be made in Church, in the event of the recovery of the child. In the case of death, nothing essential will have been omitted. Now, there has pervaded both the Church of England and the Church in the United States,

the practice of using in private houses the form for publick administration. The contrariety between rule and practice has, at the best, a very ill appearance: and it is inconceivable, how any minister can excuse his share of the irregularity; except on the plea admitted in civil jurisprudence—and indeed not without reason—that universal neglect, not noticed by authority, is a virtual change of the institution. The plea can be of no weight, except on the supposition that the subject is a mere matter of order, and rests on human will; which is the case of publicity of baptism; although doubtless the most congenial with the character of the Christian Church, and with the practice of primitive antiquity.

Unless there should take place, generally, a more energetick exercise of discipline than that which now prevails, the adherence of any individual minister to this particular requisition, would have a very unpleasant effect. Parents would avail themselves of accidental opportunities, to have their children baptized by other than their proper pastors, which would show “the nakedness of the land,” in the department of ecclesiastical discipline: for it is not probable, that there would be a prevention of this abuse, by presentations on the account of it, when many worse irregularities pass unnoticed. These statements have been gone into, as a ground for the advice to be now given—that if the minister perceive an opening for the restoring of publick baptism, as contemplated by the rubricks, it is an object worthy of his endeavour; but that if this cannot be effected, without the producing of a violation of order in other points, the remedy may be worse than the evil to which it is applied. If so, the remedying of the

imperfection here spoken of had best be left to the day, which we may hope will come, when whatever is contrary to good morals or to good order will produce an exclusion from a membership of our Church. In the mean time, the best aid that can be brought by any individual minister to the preparing for so good an end, is in an addition made to the weight of ecclesiastical authority, by the soundness of his principles, by his literary attainments, and, above all, by his piety, and the integrity of his character in every way.

The next particular occurring concerning these offices, is the language in which the promises of the sponsors are expressed ; and which are here referred to, in order to advertise the young minister of the difficulties which he will meet with, in the conceptions of many well disposed members of this Church, whose scruples he should accordingly be prepared to satisfy. In the first question addressed to the sponsor, it is said—"Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh ; so that thou wilt not follow nor be led by them ?" Although the words—"in the name of this child," are not repeated before each of the other questions, yet they are understood. Accordingly, the sponsors are put in the place of the child, who is supposed to answer the inquiries, through them. Now, this is the circumstance which occasions the perplexity ; there being an impossibility, it is said, for one person to answer for another, absolutely ; and especially for one as yet incompetent to declare consent, in what is thus undertaken by substitution.

The impossibility is so unquestionable, that the circumstance should disprove the supposition of its having been the meaning of the compilers ; which certainly ought to govern in the interpretation. They have stated what was really their design, in the subsequent charge ; which shows, indeed, that the sponsors have taken on their consciences a weighty duty ; yet not such a one as is either absurd or useless. Yet why—it may be asked—does the language of the preceding service put the sponsor in the place of the unconscious party answered for ? It is precisely what is done by parents in various ways ; when they accept for their children estates, attended by the performance of conditions ; or when they entitle them to citizenship, exacting of them certain duties, to be discharged by them when they shall have become adult. There may not be any promissory words, on such occasions ; yet the acts of the parents amount to the same thing. But what is the consequence of subsequent non-compliance of the child ? Is it crime brought on the parent ? Nothing like it ; although a forfeiture on the part of the other, of what was to be held by such a tenure.

There seems no difficulty in apprehending this ; and yet, for the want of its being properly explained, there is frequent hesitation as to an important duty. Whether the questions and the answers might not be made clearer to the apprehensions of ordinary people, and whether it would not be an improvement, this is not a proper opportunity to inquire. But there may be propriety in preparing a newly ordained minister for the difficulty. There is also a minor one, resulting from the use of the singular number, in the questions proposed to the sponsors ; although the plural



number is used in the address immediately preceding. The obvious solution of this is, that each sponsor answers for his or herself, instead of their answers being made in a combined capacity. The American Church has explained this matter, by a rubrick not found in the English Book of Common Prayer. This explicitness, however, has been lost on some ministers; who, to show how much better they understand the force of language, than either the English compilers or the conventions which revised the liturgy, address the sponsors in the plural number—"Do ye, in the name of this child," &c. Nothing but a misunderstanding of the meaning of their own words can excuse such ministers from the imputation of intending to introduce a manifest corruption into the service. The distinction made by the gentlemen of the law, between a joint act and that which is undertaken jointly and severally, is founded in good sense. The former binds each man only to his reasonable proportion of the matter to be performed; while the latter binds every one of them to the whole. Like to this is the baptismal promise made by the sponsors, when they answer agreeably to the object contemplated in the service. But the promise is far short of such a sentiment, when it has been pared down by the innovation here complained of.

Some persons have found a stumbling-block in another matter, which pervades all our offices of baptism. It is that which recognises the subject, as the regeneration required in Scripture. For, before the baptizing act, there is prayer for the benefit here spoken of: after the act, there is thanksgiving for the benefit bestowed; and the connexion between

the inward grace and the outward sign, is recognised both before and after the act, in the address to the sponsors, and in that to the congregation. In the office for the baptism of adults, there is an explanation of the passage in the third chapter of the Gospel of St. John, relating to the interview of our Lord with Nicodemus. This is a prominent place of Scripture on the subject of regeneration; and the Church applies it directly to the instituted rite of baptism.

Doubtless, all this is inconsistent with the modern use of the term regeneration. But, on the other hand, it must be contended, that the mere circumstance of the necessity of looking to modern times for such a use of the word, is a presumptive proof of there being some material error to be covered by it. The phraseology of the Church, in this particular, is nothing but a continuation of that of all Christendom, until the compiling of the liturgy, and for some time after. The celebrated Calvin expresses himself in language resembling that of the Church. And it is remarkable, that when there insinuated itself into the Church of England an attachment to the doctrine of Calvin, no offence was taken at the matter now in contemplation; which will not be found among the faults alleged by the early Puritans, against the establishment.\*

\* Calvin's manner of expressing himself on the subject may be learned from the following specimens:—"The promise in which we have explained the virtue of the sign to be" (in circumcision and baptism): "is one in each, namely, the fatherly favour of God, remission of sins, and eternal life."—"Which (repentance and faith) although they are not formed in them," (viz. infants) "yet is the seed of each hidden in them, by a secret operation of the spirit." "Wherefore unless we throw a cloud over the be-

It is true, that at this very time there began to prevail in the Church of England, at last effecting a departure from her, some novel opinions, very inconsistent with the language applied to the subject of baptism; yet, so fast was this bound on the Church by custom—not merely that of the dark ages, but handed down from the earliest times—that no attempts were made to change it. The opinions alluded to may be reduced to two. One is, that of the final perseverance of the saints; which no one can consistently hold with baptismal regeneration. The other is, that baptized infants continue under the wrath of God, and liable to his judgments in another world, unless rescued by a regeneration brought about in adult years, or in the approach to them.

To accommodate to these prejudices, which were not thought of until the period of the Reformation, or perhaps not long before, among some of those who are called the school divines, would require a correction not only of the baptismal services, but of the whole system; in almost every department of which there is either a direct or a virtual denial of them. But if these services only were in question, it is to be hoped, that the present characteristick of them will be retained, as a protest against modern error. And the subject is here introduced, as furnishing an opportunity of admonishing the minister, that if, in the matters referred to, his instructions should be at variance with the services of the Church;

neficence of God, we are to offer to him our infants, to whom he has assigned a place among his friends and domesticks; that is, the members of his Church."—*Instit. lib. iv. cap. xvi. sect. 4 and 20.*

It becomes him to consider, how such inconsistency can be reconciled with the promises recently made, by any explanation which shall be agreeable to integrity and truth. But if he should maintain what the Church conceives to be evangelical doctrine on the present subjects, the use of introducing them at this time, will be, to prepare him for the occasions probably to occur, of clearing her baptismal services from objection. And this he cannot do, without an incidental proof of her adherence to the integrity of Christian doctrine generally.

There shall be made a few remarks, tending to sustain the seriousness of the occasions on which the baptismal services are used; and a due regard to the consequent obligations.

It sometimes happens, that when an infant is to be baptized; and there has been an invitation of family connexions to be present at the transaction, a degree of levity takes place, ill suited to the being assembled for a religious ordinance. The occasion, it is true, is of a cheerful complexion; and there is no design, in what is to be here said, to induce the minister to change it into a gloomy one. But surely, there is a reverent behaviour, equally remote from the two extremes. That is the course which is here recommended: and when any thing is uttered, evidently expressive of the want of sense of religion on the mind; if the minister do not show himself hurt at the offence against the very foundation, on which he supposes himself to have been administering a divinely instituted ordinance; it is such a step towards giving up the cause into the hands of profaneness or of infidelity, as makes it too probable, that he would proceed to the extremity of abjuration, if there

were eminent advantage to be gained, or considerable danger to be shunned by it.

Relatively to the baptism of adults, the intimation is to be given, that there is great need to fence it by the strictest care, as to the character and the sufficient information of the subjects of it. Under the religious circumstances of this country, there are not any considerable temptations, to a person's conforming to this rite of our holy religion, from any other than a conscientious motive. But without the prospect of gain, or for the gratifying of ambition, a man may be forward to put his hand to the plough, without his having sufficiently estimated what the following of it requires. Religion is evidently more wounded by the apostacy of such a person, baptized at an adult age, than by that of one who had been baptized in infancy.

As to the measure of information to be required of an adult candidate for baptism, the opinion is not here entertained, that it should go to a great extent; examples to the contrary appearing in Scripture, as in the baptizing of Cornelius and his household, of the jailer and his household, and of the Ethiopian eunuch. These persons, indeed, had been made sensible of recent exertions of Omnipotence, in the establishment of Christianity: and they were informed of the nature of it so far, as that they received its Divine Author, in the characters of their Saviour and their spiritual Lawgiver. In succeeding ages, the same conviction is necessary, although obtained from less sensible manifestations; and the conviction can hardly be possessed at the present day, without more knowledge of the contents of the Christian system, than existed in the minds of those early converts.

It seems at least probable, that one cause of the rite of confirmation, was the ensuring of a consequent proficiency in knowledge; in the cases of persons who, with a very imperfect knowledge of its contents, and yet under full conviction of its heavenly origin, had been admitted of the body of the faithful. The very earliest ages are here spoken of: for when we come down to the fourth century, we find a long course of time and much pains dedicated to the preparing of persons in the character of catechumens for the rite of baptism.

There is another scruple, sometimes occurring to the minds of well meaning people, in the renouncing of "the pomps and the vanities of the world;" which they construe as intended to forbid many matters not criminal; and against which their consciences would have no scruple; any further than as it might arise from the promise exacted of them in this ordinance, relatively to the presented infant. The history of the promise will throw light on the meaning of it. When introduced into the Church, it appears from passages in several of the fathers, to have been especially intended against the Heathen shows. These were accompanied by idolatry; and, on this account, if there had been no other, could not have been attended by Christians, consistently with their profession. But besides the idolatry, there were much cruelty and lewdness exhibited on those occasions; and therefore, these being practiced after the ceasing of the other, the pastors of the Church still cautioned the people against frequenting them. The renunciation being continued, points to whatever is immoral, and to nothing more. Any person hesitating at such a promise as this properly under-

stood, is not either a fit subject of baptism, or a suitable sponsor for another. Some have even construed the promise, as renouncing those habits of dress which are suited to certain circumstances and states of life. It is impossible that this should have been intended, however contrary excess and vanity in dress to the Christian profession, even if there had been no such promise as that in question. The promise is a renunciation of every thing opposed to Christian morals. But for whatever comes not under this description, the sponsor need not hesitate, on account of the language in which the promise is clothed.

The next of the offices of our Church, is her Catechism; which was evidently designed, principally, for persons baptized in infancy. It does not follow, however, that an adult should be admitted to baptism, without as much elementary information as is therein contained. By this, it is not meant, that the reciting of the Catechism by memory should be the test of the qualifications of an adult; because a person may be competent to such a recitation, and yet not to the satisfying of an inquiring minister, as to the requisite sufficiency. And on the other hand, a person may have the requisite information, and demonstrate it in discourse, without a recitation of the very words, in which the Church has clothed this compendium of Christian doctrine. But that, agreeably to the opinion already delivered, the Church looks more to the party's sincerity of belief, than to his or her extent of knowledge, is evident from the charge to the "chosen witnesses," to call on the party to be "rightly instructed in God's holy word."

When catechising was introduced into the Church, which must have been in the infancy of our holy religion, it was an exercise, that had no especial relation to children ; and the instructions of it were probably less addressed to them than to persons of mature age. It must be evident, that in those days, when the great mass of the people were strangers to the art of reading, catechising—that is, the instructing by the way of question and answer, in the first principles of the faith—was a much more effectual way than preaching, of communicating them to the ignorant : and this, not only because of the form of the exercise, but because it was confined to the most necessary truths. However great the publick benefit, achieved principally by the art of printing, of an ability to read in the great mass of the community ; yet there has resulted the disadvantage of reducing the learning of the Catechism to be a mere exercise for children. It would be no matter, as to the mere acquaintance with that body of doctrine, if all were taught to read, either in their infancy, or when they are advancing to maturity ; and if, whether taught to read or not, they were put into the way of being instructed and examined in the Catechism, which is possible.

Even at the time of the Reformation, there were doubtless a great proportion of the people of England—it may be presumed, indeed, the far greater number of them—strangers to letters. And hence it may be inferred, that when the rubrick requires of the minister to “instruct and examine” in the Catechism, it was intended, not only that he should propose questions and receive answers, but that, in regard to persons not taught to read, the instructor



should repeat the words until sufficiently imprinted on the memories of the instructed, to be followed by them. It is true, that the rubricks speak only of "children, apprentices, and servants." But the fifty-ninth canon of the Church of England has the more general expression of—"youth and other ignorant persons." And besides, in a country in which all are contemplated, as born and brought up within the bosom of the Church, it was natural to specify that period only, which, if it were properly improved, would leave nothing to be done at any other, as to the matter in question.

That the Church intended her ministers to instruct in the way which has been defined, is here confidently believed. And it will appear to be necessarily attached to the subject, if we consider, that, on any other principle, the great mass of the people were left unprovided for, in the article of catechetical instruction. At present, there are comparatively few children who may not be prepared for examination in their Catechism, either by their masters or mistresses, or by their parents. But if, of those who present themselves, there should be any whom Providence has deprived of this advantage, it is clearly held, that the minister should supply the deficiency, however humble the employment thus assigned to him. The same applies to adults, willing to be instructed in the same way. It will, however, be difficult to procure the attendance of such; because of the prejudice, that the saying of Catechism is incumbent on children only."\*

\* The sentiments which have been delivered are strengthened by the etymology of the word "Catechism," which signifies the instructing by sound.

But there occurs the important question—Whether a minister has discharged his whole duty in the contemplated work of instruction and examination, when he has proposed the questions, and received the answers in the Catechism. It is not undertaken to define at what limits instruction, generally considered, should stop: and on this point, something is held in reserve. But it is the opinion, that under the appropriate term of catechising, the Church means no more than the furnishing of the memory with the matter which the Catechism contains. The terms of the rubric specify the instructing and the examining in this summary of Christian faith and duty, without a word relative to the proofs, or any other amplification of its doctrines. And another rubrick enjoins presentment for confirmation, at the attainment to a suitable age; on the condition of an ability to “say the Lord’s Prayer, and the Creed, and the Ten Commandments;” and also, “to answer to the other questions of the Catechism.” It would be an unjustifiable interpretation of this, were it construed to dispense with such religious information and impression, as may be made on the party’s mind, of the nature of the ordinance in prospect. Still, in the retrospect to the catechetical department merely, the terms used by the Church prove her satisfied with the proficiency which has been stated.

Before further progress, let there be a caution against entertaining too low an apprehension of this proficiency. Persons living always under the blaze of Christian knowledge, and possessed of other advantages of a land illuminated by science, are apt to imagine, that we can make all this our own, by our native energy; and not to perceive, that without

the aid of external instruction, a great proportion of mankind would be, in character, very little above the brutes. Now, in regard to those classes of society who labour incessantly for their subsistence, it will not be rash to affirm, that the instruction which they may acquire from the compendium called the Catechism, the particulars being deeply rooted in their memories, often called up to their recollection, and applied by an ordinary share of understanding to the various occasions of life, is likely to be a better guide to them than any knowledge which the uniformity of their pursuits is likely to permit to come to them from any other quarter. The remark, however, is perhaps less applicable to this country than to any part of Europe; because of the comparative ease of acquiring here a subsistence. But it applies in a degree; and besides, there are to be established general principles, which may be done, consistently with due regard to an accommodation to local peculiarities.

Besides the application of the subject to persons of the lower and the more laborious orders, it may further be affirmed, that there is great demand in the higher, for the literary information of the Catechism. Even in what is considered as the first society, it is not uncommon to hear remarks, which argue entire ignorance of the first principles of natural theology, and of the foundation of moral obligation. If you were to ask the persons to whom this applies, whether they acknowledge the being of a God, and a rule of moral duty; on these general points their answers would be in the affirmative. But in an application of the subjects in their respective lines of operation, they would manifest a

degree of the want of information and of reflection ; the first of which might have been furnished to them, and the latter made the work of their own minds, by the instrument which we call the Catechism ; and which is probably very little in their eyes. Perhaps the effect might be produced, even if there were no more of it than the comprehensive answers concerning our duties to God and to our neighbour. So that there is much use in the very moderate requisitions, which may be drawn from the positive institutions of the Church, on the subject of catechising. Still, there recurs the inquiry—Can nothing be done towards the important object of the exercise, besides the furnishing of the memory with the prescribed answers to the questions ? The answer is, that doubtless much may be done ; and that it may be worthy of attention, in this place, to estimate the several expedients which have been adopted for the purpose.

Some English divines have recommended, that the young persons be furnished by the catechising minister, as he proceeds in the exercise, with information additional to what is contained in the catechetical answers ; and that they be afterwards examined by him on what they have been thus taught. This appears to have been sometimes practised in England and in America ; but it has not been general in either. The objection occurring, is in the difficulty of accomplishing the undertaking. The answers are supposed to be not from mere memory, but accompanied by an exercise of the judgment. To obtain these from young persons, in the presence of casual listeners to the exercise, is more than there is reason to hope for, from any thing within the

limits of experience; which would also lead to believe, that the answers given under such circumstances, must be insufficient tests of the respective acquirements of the answerers. This remark is grounded on the timidity of a considerable proportion of young persons; which is sometimes so great, as to make it difficult to obtain from them audibly, even what they have committed perfectly to memory. Still, the object being very good, if any clergyman see cause to hope to carry it into effect, it is not designed to throw any discouragement in his way.

Perhaps it has been from the being aware of the difficulty stated, that some parochial clergymen put into the hands of children additional questions and answers; and these sometimes accompanied by texts of Scripture, in evidence of the truths affirmed, both in the Catechism and in such its supplement. Now, the committing of the one or the other to memory, is not for immediate use, but for a guide in future life. It would therefore seem, that what is short, though comprehensive, is more likely than the same matter more dilated, to be so engrafted, as to leave an indelible impression of the intended truths; and with what is thus learned, other instruction, afterwards acquired, will happily combine; from whatever quarter it may come, and without a committing to memory of the precise words in which it may be clothed. In the species of enlarged exercise of the memory now commented on, there is certainly a use in the texts of Scripture comprehended; but whether they would not be best confined to the sustaining of the matter of the Catechism, may be made a question; without discouraging the enlargement

here noticed, where it may be thought expedient. But independently on any such enlargement of the work of memory, it must be evident that catechising opens opportunities of such short remarks, as may, perhaps, make on youthful minds impressions never afterwards to be erased. Accordingly, occasion is taken to recommend this practice; and it will be rendered still more useful, if there can be put some familiar questions to the larger children; and answers received from them, in such a manner as is not calculated to intimidate; for if this should be the effect there is no good to be expected.

There has been recommended—and on very respectable authority—the minister's taking occasion to explain, without a formal and written discourse, some portion of the exercise. This may certainly be made instrumental to edification: but, as is here suspected, not to that of the children, who will be too young to be profited; and who, it is probable, will hardly be attending to what is said; but to any parents or others who may choose to be present on such occasions. It is an error of a great proportion of the Christian world, that they affect to soar to the highest reach of speculation, and to dive into the depths of mystery, while they are not sufficiently informed of what lies on a level with every ordinary understanding—the obvious truths of Scripture, and the reasons on which its duties rest. That the error alluded to must be checked, and that an opposite usefully inquisitive spirit must be encouraged, by what is here treated of, cannot but be evident.

The same idea is said to be carried much further by some religious communions; who require their ministers to discourse, on every afternoon of Sun-

day, on some part of their Catechism, and on that only. There is entertained no doubt of the wisdom of the regulation; but, on the contrary, they wish that it were introduced into this Church; with the reservation, however, that, being an innovation, it would not meet with difficulties here unforeseen.

It will be perceived, that the greater part of what has been advanced, is very much in the form of leaving the ordained minister to judge for himself, and according to circumstances, of the merits of the different matters which have been spoken of. There is, however, at least one matter, not to be left on so uncertain a foundation, and that is the duty indispensably lying on him, of giving an opportunity to all young and other uninformed persons, of being furnished with the measure of religious information contained in the Catechism. What are the means to be adopted by him to allure them, and their parents, guardians, and masters, to send them to the opportunity thus provided for them, must of course be submitted to his judgment. And what success shall attend his endeavours in this line, must be left, under God, to the Christian disposition of all concerned.

The office coming next in order to the Catechism, is Confirmation. The duty of the minister, as to this rite, is too plain to be mistaken. Whatever is the sense of the promises made by the sponsors at the baptism, the same the confirmed persons take on themselves in the succeeding ordinance. To instruct them to the extent of this, is of course the duty of the parochial minister; and if, in the exercise of this part of his office, it should be in his power, by a word spoken in due season, to make an

impression on the youthful mind that shall not be lost in future life, it will not only be one of the best exercises of his ministerial calling, but also one of the evidences of the uses of the particular ordinance in contemplation.

It ought not to escape the notice of a minister, how much this Church differs from those societies of professing Christians, who exact evidence of a conversion subsequent to baptism. She knows of no such matter in preparing persons baptized in infancy for the rite of confirmation; but presumes them to have been made the children of God in the preceding rite. It would be a shameful use of this circumstance, were any minister, agreeably to an accusation laid in the very matter here treated of, to encourage the people to rest in forms; these having no effect on the life, except as a caution against gross immorality and indecorum. There is nothing of the kind in the ecclesiastical institutions of this Church: and she directs the attention of her members to the highest attainments, which can be comprehended under the idea of a renovation of the spirit; the principle of which is pledged in baptism; while whatever follows is calculated to call it forth to exercise.

There does not occur, on the present subject, more than one particular on which there seems likely to arise a doubt, in carrying the intentions of the Church into effect. The rubrick at the end of the service, specifies that "none shall be admitted to the communion until they be confirmed, or are willing and desirous to be confirmed." The Church evidently designed to declare, that, during the want of opportunity of attendance on the ordinance of con-



firmation, a devout person was not to be debarred from the consolations and the aids attendant on another holy ordinance, to which the first was commonly preparatory. Even in England, there must be frequent occasions of having recourse to the dispensation. The diocesses, indeed, do not comprehend, as here, great extents of country ; so that the holding of a confirmation in each diocese triennially, connected with the established custom of calling out all the proper subjects of confirmation in the respective neighbourhoods, at as early ages as consists with the nature of the ordinance, would seem to provide sufficiently against the want of opportunity. Yet it frequently happens, that in consequence of the extreme age and the attendant infirmities of a bishop, some arrive at maturity before an opportunity presents itself. The question then is, whether a person of this description, in the meantime become a communicant, be required to attend at a succeeding occasion of confirmation.

It would seem that the words of the rubrick do not exact it. And what occasions the supposition, that the practice in England is agreeable to this sentiment is, that during the long space of time of the connexion with the English bishops, they never required the candidates for orders from this country, to submit to the rite of confirmation. They knew that there was no opportunity for it at home : and it does not appear on what principle the matter can have been dispensed with, except on the reasonable presumption, of what was indeed implied in the testimonials of the candidates, that they had been communicants : the preceding ordinance having been passed over, not from slight, but from necessity.

It may be not irrelevant to record the opinion of Archbishop Secker on the subject ; especially as his memory has been much respected by our clergy ; not only because of the general excellency of his character, but on account of the interest taken by him in the concerns of the churches in these States, while they were yet colonies of Great-Britain. Speaking of persons in the predicament here contemplated, he says—" There are not indeed all the sound reasons for the confirmation of such, as of others ; nor hath the Church, I believe, commanded any thing about their case, as it might be thought unlikely to happen. But still, since it doth happen too frequently, that persons were not able, or have neglected to apply for this purpose ; so, whenever they apply, as by doing it they express a desire to fulfil all righteousness, and may certainly receive benefit, both from the profession and the prayers appointed in the office, my judgment is, that they should not be rejected, but rather encouraged."\*

The next service is the solemnization of matrimony. In this, there are not only ecclesiastical but also civil laws to be regarded. The latter being different in different states, their bearing on the subject shall be treated of, only as they stand in this state.†

If a clergyman should solemnize marriage under any legal impediment, he is liable to the very moderate fine of £50. What ought to be far more important to him than any fine which might have been imposed, he brings a stain on his character ; and, so far as that of the Church is implicated in his, on her's also. But the worst consequence of all

\* Vol. iv. p. 47.

† Pennsylvania.

to him, is that it ought to be a burden on his conscience. It is a great oversight in the legislature, or rather, according to what has been learned from respectable authority, the effect of a mistaken opinion on the subject, that the laws do not inflict a punishment adequate to the offence. In England it is transportation: and if this should be construed by any, as derogatory to the clerical character, it is here rather believed to be intended with a directly opposite view. No reason can be given why the punishment should not be something both of loss and of disgrace, where the minister either knows of the impediment, or does not take such means of information, as the nature of the case requires. In the case of young people in particular, the joining of them in marriage without the consent of their parents or guardians, there being no imposition to plead, or the imposition being such as is invited, by there being no demand of proper testimony from proper persons, is an invasion of domestick rights, which ought to cover the doer of it with infamy. Accordingly every minister, recently ordained, should be admonished to avoid so great a crime and so great a scandal. Let him remember, that the only reason of introducing a religious service, to accompany a contract which, without it, would be both lawful and binding, is to give solemnity to the transaction; and that, therefore, when it is prostituted to the covering of illegality and of undutifulness, the baseness of the deed consists not only in an invasion of another's rights, but in a prostitution of all the holy solemnities of religious worship.

Sometimes an apology for such conduct is grounded on the loose footing on which marriage rests: the

licenses issued by government being notoriously without the sanction of law, so that if a clergyman proceed on such an instrument, it does not acquit him of fault in an illegal marriage; and neither is the requiring of it exacted of him in a marriage unquestionably legal. Were the writer speaking on this point as a citizen, he would contend, that it is mistaken policy. But addressing himself to a clergyman, he says, that in this character there is no reason to complain. All that a clergyman can have a right to expect is, that in the religious society of which he is a minister, marriages celebrated by him agreeably to the rules of his Church, and not interfering with the civil rights of any member of society, shall be valid. Has the legislature interfered to forbid this? It will not be pretended. But for whose sake is there this authorized sufficiency of his marriages? Certainly it is not for his personal advantage, but in tenderness to the religious freedom of his society. Now, in that section of his society, which is more immediately under his pastoral charge, there is little probability that he will be deceived, into the celebrating of a clandestine marriage. Or, if there be use in any further scrutiny than his own, it may be provided for by the society, without legislative interference. In what way, then, would he be benefited by a legal and legalizing license? It is, as solemnizing the marriages of persons of various descriptions, who may be unknown to him, until their appearance in this business. Now, it is not said, that he is to refuse such persons, if there should be offered to him sufficient evidence of their right to dispose of themselves in marriage. But it is contended, that if he avail himself of the privilege which the laws of his

country indulge to him, he has no reason to complain of the condition of not invading the rights of others. He may reject, if he please, both the privilege and the condition attached to it. The matter would be otherwise, if the solemnizing of marriage within his communion were attended by dangers, which neither he nor they could guard against. They reasonably consider it as a part of their religious freedom, to conduct such a transaction under the auspices of the rites of their ecclesiastical system.

These sentiments are expressed in order to show how evidently inexcusable a clergyman is, who, in any instance, neglects the obvious means of information; much more, who keeps an open office for almost all comers: it being understood, either that no questions will be asked, or that the answers to them will be received, without the knowledge of the characters of those on whose testimony so important a transaction is to be bottomed. It is not here meant, that a clergyman is to go about in quest of evidence on the merits of the case before him. There would be a lessening of himself in so doing. The evidences of the competency of the parties to dispose of themselves should be brought to him; and, in failure of this, he should refuse. When the domestick peace of any of his fellow-citizens may be affected by his determination, it surely ought not to be made up on evidence, which no dealer would trust to, as security for payment for his wares.

It will be proper to apprise the minister of some requests, which are occasionally made by parties applying to be married, but which should be uniformly and positively rejected.

One—and that pre-eminently inadmissible—is

the omission of the charge addressed to the consciences of the parties. Why should there be reluctance to the hearing of this, if there be no wound too tender to be touched by such a probe? The answer will probably be, that the solemnity attached to this part of the service, is too much for such a season of sensibility. But is there not the same objection against calling on God in prayer, or the giving of the benediction in his sacred name? There cannot be shown any difference in the two cases, except that there is a sentiment running through the charge, which may fall very heavily on the consciences of some persons, but which lights with entire harmlessness on the consciences of others. This is not intended to imply, that in all cases in which the charge is wished to be omitted, there is a consciousness of a prior engagement. In some requests to the effect here known to have been unsuccessfully made, there has been confident belief of the contrary. In these cases, the requests may be imputed simply to the desire, which is apt to possess the minds of some young persons, that, on these very interesting occasions, they may be indulged by a brevity not promiscuously granted: and were the service reduced steadily to two sentences, there would be the requests of some, that it might be reduced to one sentence, in regard to them. The result of the whole is, that the minister ought not, on any occasion, to dispense with the charge. He must have had very little intercourse with the world, if he have not seen reason to believe, that some young people make and break matrimonial engagements with a levity that is utterly inexcusable. If he indulge a few by the omission in question, from

the confident persuasion that they are not implicated in former engagements, he must extend the indulgence to all who ask it, against whom he has no knowledge that they are pre-engaged, otherwise he offers insults. Thus he is drawn on to throw down one of the most important barriers against criminal connexions; which, no doubt, have often been prevented by the circumstance of the solemn appeal; which must also be made to Almighty God, for what they know to be contrary to truth. It is not often indeed, that either of the parties has shrunk from the question, when actually proposed; although even this has sometimes happened. But how often the anticipation of the question may have interfered to prevent a contemplated marriage, is more than any one can ascertain.

Another request occasionally made, is for the dispensing with a repetition of the words put into the mouths of the parties by the service; it being sufficient, as they think, to assent by signs; or, at most, by the monosyllable—Yes. As there may be occasions, on which one of the parties may find some plausible pretence to countenance the allegation, that he or she did not understand the import of the words addressed to them; and as it is probable, that the requisition has been made for the very purpose of guarding against such abuse; the adhering to the requisition is important, independently on the circumstance of its being a part of the service. Doubtless in many marriages, probably in the greater number of them, there can hardly be contemplated the possibility of the evil here referred to. But for a reason already given, there cannot be different forms of service for different persons.

Sometimes also it is requested, that the modesty of the bride may be spared by a performance of the service in almost entire darkness, there being but little light, and that from an adjoining room or an entry. Now, let it be asked—How can the minister, with a good conscience, record such a marriage, in a book expected to pass in evidence in a court of justice? Further, what reason is there to expect, that a book, understood to be so kept, would be admitted as evidence? And still farther, can a clergyman, if hereafter called on to prove the marriage, swear to a fact of which he has not had the evidence of any one of his senses? If people are so thoughtless as to commit their reputation, and the future interests of their families, to such hazards, a clergyman ought to be so far a better guardian of them, as not to injure them in the very act of discharging a sacred duty.

The same sentiment applies to another request, occasionally made, of being married without witnesses. There are varieties in human affairs, in which this would shake the validity of the transaction: and if a man and a woman can reconcile themselves to such a species of "Felo de se," there is no need that a clergyman should make himself accessory to the fact: and—let it be still added—independently on the circumstance of its being otherwise ordered by the Church.

There might be here brought forwards some very important questions on the subject of marriage; especially as concerns the degrees within which the connexion is allowable, and the just causes of divorce. But they are avoided; because, as they are matters which ought to come before some future General Convention, agreeably to the recommenda-



tion of a former body of that description, it is not wished to give a pledge which may possibly be an impediment to a future impartial judgment. But it will not be inconsistent with this caution, to mention what has been all along the opinion and the practice of the present speaker, in regard to the ecclesiastical institutions now existing. He considers all which existed before the American Revolution as continuing after it, until altered by competent authority. Whatever related to the jurisdiction of the mother country, whether civil or ecclesiastical, was repealed by the act of Providence, which severed the American Church from her jurisdiction. Since that event, every part of the system has been under review, with the single exception of the table which relates to marriage. During the continuance of this state of things, it is here thought that there should be adherence to the former regulations. But let it be further noted, that although the subject has not been acted on by any General Convention, in the form of canons: such a body have given their opinion in a resolution, that it is contrary to the law of God to join in marriage any person divorced for any other cause than that of adultery. The violation of this principle, by any clergyman possessed of a knowledge of the prohibiting circumstance of prior marriage, would be a virtual renunciation of Christianity. And he would do the same explicitly, if the changes of human policy should render it advantageous to him.

There shall be taken occasion to intimate the importance of the conventual provision, for the registering of every marriage. It exacts but little trouble to the clergyman; but may prove of the utmost

importance to the rights and to the reputation of the marrying parties, as the present speaker has witnessed in a multitude of cases. He will so far look back to the former subject of baptism, as to remark, that the like importance, not indeed of reputation, but of pecuniary and of landed rights, attaches to that subject also in respect to registering. The want of a general civil provision, operating to the effect of registering, so far as marriages are concerned, will, it is here thought, be severely felt throughout the United States, at some future time.

*Of the Visitation of the Sick.* On this office there shall be made remarks, growing out of two parts of the service—The Exhortation and the Prayers.

The rubrick before the exhortation specifies, that the minister shall address the party, in that or the like form. As it sometimes happens that sick persons are harassed in their states of weakness, by the obtruding on them matters far wide of truth and soberness; it is to the purpose to mention, that the Church must have supposed all necessary and general topics to have been handled, however briefly, in her prescribed address. Of consequence, what cannot find there a ground-work, must be judged by her superfluous, or else she has essentially erred in respect to the topics to be brought before her members; in those their states of life, which ought the most to make them the objects of her solicitude. It is not here alleged, that the minister is tied to the precise words of the exhortation. In this respect, a latitude is expressly given: And perhaps the sentiments in that instrument, may be introduced the

more advantageously in the way of familiar conversation. Neither is it denied, that in such conversation, exigencies may require enlargements ; in some cases on one, and in other cases on another of the topicks. All intended to be guarded against, is the idea, that the Church has been guilty of any material omission ; which must be supplied by the superior wisdom of the officiating minister.

The office before us calls, above every other, for the preparation in contemplation of the passage of Scripture, in which the minister of the Gospel is compared to "an householder, who brings forth from his treasures things new and old." The spirit of the comparison is, in his being furnished with, and having ready to his call, all the topicks of edification which may be required by any of the various states of the human mind. And this variety will in no instances be so conspicuous, as in the scenes which sick beds present. When a clergyman sits down to prepare for the pulpit, he has generally an unlimited range of choice of subject : And if he is restricted on occasions comparatively few ; still his subjects are to be stated in the points of view in which they concern mankind in general. It is otherwise, on a great proportion of the occasions, on which the ministry is needed by sick and dying persons ; in whom there will often be found prejudices and weaknesses, not to be met but by the preparation which results from the contemplation of the truths of Scripture, not only as they are in themselves, but in their bearings on the various operations of men's spirits. It is under difficulties of this sort that a clergyman will the most feel the advantage of having his mind stored with those texts of Scripture, which

contradict error, or sustain their opposing truths; and those texts, which either shake the foundation of unreasonable presumption, or bear up the soul against the terrors of unreasonable despondency.

It would be endless to recite all the difficulties which occur in this department of the clerical profession. But there is one which is met with so often, and the sentiment on which it is grounded is so fruitful of distress, that it may be pertinently, and perhaps usefully mentioned on this occasion. It is, when the patient labours under the persuasion, that there is no safety except under an internal assurance, and consequent sensibility of the forgiveness of sin and future felicity. On the supposition that this expectation is agreeable to Gospel truth, there ought certainly to be an abandonment of the Episcopal Church. She has not given an intimation of it in any of her institutions; and the place where the want of it appears the most conspicuously of all, is in the preparation which she has made for the awful hour of approaching dissolution. She indeed avails herself of the crisis for the enforcing of the duty of repentance; but of the acceptance of it she knows no test besides the consciousness of sincerity within, and the declarations of the word of God without.

In speaking of the prayers of the present service, the principal motive is to make the acknowledgment, of the considering of the service as less perfect than the other services in this respect, that it has not provided for all the points which occasionally come into contemplation in such devotions. Of the defects which occur there shall be named a few, and those the most prominent. Although there is "a prayer for persons troubled in mind or in conscience," which

is, indeed, an excellent one, for persons under an unusual degree of terror; yet there are gloomy and desponding states of mind, far short of this, and admitting of being adverted to very profitably. Again, there seems the want of a prayer accommodated to the extreme distress, sometimes visible in attendant connexions and friends. There is indeed "a prayer which may be said by the minister, in behalf of all present at the visitation." It is not in the liturgy of the Church of England, but was inserted, at the time of the review, from Bishop Taylor's Rule of Holy Living and Dying. It is an excellent prayer, but does not go to the points now in contemplation. Further, there are frequently favourable symptoms in the case of a sick person, worthy of being gratefully remembered in the solemnity; yet not so strong as to justify the composition called "A Thanksgiving for the Beginning of a Recovery:" which was also taken from Bishop Taylor. So that although this office seems to have been improved; yet, on the supposition of there being still room for improvement, it is thought not contrary to good order, for a minister to add something of his own, or from approved authors, suited to the occasional circumstances which have been mentioned; or to any others which may occur. And he is advised to be prepared for such circumstances, by occasionally reflecting on the variety of them, into which he may come unexpectedly.

There ought not to be finished these remarks, without something said to a question of great practical importance. That a minister, when applied to, is bound in duty to visit a sick parishioner, none doubt. But the question is—whether the former

should repair to the patient uninvited. On an examination of the institutions of the Church, there is found no injunction on him to this effect. On repairing to the higher authority of Scripture, there is found the precept—"If any be sick among you, let him send for the elders of the Church;" but none to the elders to go unsent for. If personal humiliation only were involved in the offer and the rejection of religious aid; a minister, having his heart much engaged in the full discharge of evangelical duty, might be laudably disposed to make great sacrifices, for the satisfying of his conscience as to the duty here the subject. But the truth is—and there might be produced cases in proof of the assertion—that he would be in danger of lowering, in this way, the respectability of the ministry itself. If there be any cause of hesitation in the matter, it must evidently be much increased, by a conjunction of the labours of different ministers, in the service of the same flock; because, in such a case there may be some circumstance rendering the ministry of one of them preferable to the patient, without any implied undervaluing of the other.

Accordingly, there is not seen cause to state it as a duty on a newly ordained minister to make his way, welcome or unwelcome, into the sick room of a parishioner. But if it be known to him, from conversation with the parishioner when in health, that he conceives of there being a propriety in such visits in the time of sickness, advantage should be taken of such a circumstance. Besides this, there will occasionally occur, in conversation with various friends and connexions of the sick, opportunities of insinuating how readily any proposal of such an

intercourse would be complied with. If it should seem that there is entertained too low an idea of clerical duty in the present instance, let the question occur—Why the patient or his friends should be more desirous of a spontaneous, than of a requested visit from the minister? It should be recollected, that, in a great variety of cases, he will be ignorant of there being any such occasion for his services: and if, in any particular case, his knowledge of the occasion should be ascertained, this is irrelevant; because the matter in quest of is a general rule. Still, the question remains—Why a spontaneous visit, or else none? There can be but one reason—the maintaining of the appearance of the party's having merely submitted to a visitation, which a portion of society will be sure to pronounce superfluous and superstitious; and perhaps make a theme of ridicule, in the event of a recovery. Is the theory of the pastoral duty to be accommodated to so corrupt a prejudice? It is thought otherwise. Above all, the ready, punctual, and strict compliance with the duty, when an opportunity for it has been given, ought to demonstrate, that if the minister does not visit in all cases, it is not in any case from indisposition to the duty on his part.

*The Communion of the Sick.* The only remark to be made under this office, relates to a difficulty found in a strict adherence to the rubrick, which requires, two at least to communicate with the minister and the sick person. The rubrick is the same with that in the Church of England; except, that for "three, or two at the least," there has been taken the latter part of the alternative only. Now,

in England, where there is, within a very small compass, the whole congregation of which the sick person is a member ; there can hardly be much difficulty in obtaining two communicants to join with a sick brother or sister in the eucharistick sacrifice. But it is otherwise in this country ; so that, very often, in a case of sickness which may soon terminate in death, either there must be a dispensation with the required number, or the patient must be deprived of the consolations of the ordinance. In such an extremity it would seem, that of two duties, the more important is not dispensed with, by the impossibility of complying with the other. The latitude thus pleaded for, is agreeable to the letter, as well as to the spirit of the requisitions. The provision for there being two at least, is indeed mandatory ; and therefore ought to be attended to. But it is not said, that, in case of a failure to obtain them, the sacrament is to be refused. The blame, if there be any, must be in remissness as to the first particular. And this is especially incumbent on the sick and their friends, to whom the command should be considered as addressed. It is so far incumbent on the minister also, as that he should remind the people of their duty. But it is not perceived, that he should withhold the ordinance, in punishment for their delinquency ; and much less, when he is satisfied that they have done their endeavours without success.

*The Burial of the Dead.* The improvement made by the American Church in this department, has, it is trusted, left no plausible ground of objection against the service. In particular, it is so de-



vested of all reference to the state of the deceased person, that no scandal of his life need occasion scruple in the minister, or disgust in the attendants on the solemnity. On this account, some have wondered at the prohibition of its being said at the funeral of an unbaptized adult. There is not here seen any good reason for the prohibition ; yet, it is in the rubrick, and should be complied with, on its being duly certified to the minister, that the person died unbaptized. If the enforcing of the exception, by an inquisition into the circumstances of each case, be thought by any to have a tendency to increase an attention to the rite of baptism, the means are not here thought suited to the end.

But there is another prohibition—that of not reading the service over persons who have laid violent hands on themselves. Here, then, the remark applies as before, that there is no reference to the state of the party : and the consequence of the remark may seem to be the same. But the rule ought to be continued in this instance, on another ground—the maintaining of privacy and the absence of parade, with which families have hitherto thought it the most suitable to deposite the remains of such, their unfortunate members. Far be the thought of wishing to extend to this country those severe laws which, in other countries, revenge on the poor tene-ment of clay the last misdeed of its deluded inhabitant. But, surely, decorum and good sense will declare in favour of the present practice, of a decent sepulture : without any other than the most necessary attendance.

*“ The Thanksgiving of Women after Child-*

*birth*," although standing a distinct service in the American liturgy, as in the English, may yet be reduced to the thanksgiving prayer contained in it; which, for convenience, stands among the other occasional prayers and thanksgivings, after the litany. In this country, practice has generally put the subject on a footing with occasions of recovery from sickness, and other signal mercies received.

"*Forms of Prayer to be used at Sea*," are certainly a very proper addition to the liturgy; but, in this country, are not likely to come within the sphere of the ministry, in many instances. And when the occasion for it may happen, there does not seem likely to arise any difficulty in the discharge of the duty.

"*A Form of Prayer for the Visitation of Prisoners*," was taken by the Convention from the Irish editions of the Book of Common Prayer. The form had been established by the viceroyalty of Ireland, with the approbation of the prelates of that country, and was, no doubt, composed by them; but was unknown to the English book, until the late union of the two countries, under an imperial parliament. It is certainly a valuable addition to the English liturgy and to the American. Perhaps there are no occasions so trying to the feelings of a clergyman, as those on which he is called to administer instruction or consolation, to persons in the unhappy predicament contemplated; and especially to those whose lives are to be the forfeits of their crimes. There cannot be any necessity of proving to a Christian minister, the duty of making such

sacrifices of feeling to calls so awful. But there may be use in intimating to him the two extremes, which he should be careful to avoid. They are, on the one hand, the so limiting of the mercies of God, as to withhold the assurance of them, to all who come to him in repentance and faith; and, on the other hand, the so making of present feeling an infallible test of sincerity, as if there could be, under the circumstances supposed, an equal degree of confidence in it; with that which may accompany a long perseverance in piety and virtue, amidst the blandishments of the world, and without the prospect of death immediately before the eyes. There have been known instances of persons under the sentence of the law, very rapidly exalted in the estimation of their instructors, from the character of hackneyed sinners into that of experienced saints. And of these, there have been known some, who, being unexpectedly pardoned, have undergone a contrary change as speedily as they made the former. No more shall be here said, because a correct knowledge of the Scripture scheme of salvation, will not permit a minister to err materially in this particular.

The last of the public offices, is that compiled by the American Convention, called, "*A Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the Fruits of the Earth, and all the other Blessings of his merciful Providence.*" A minister can hardly err in the use of it: and the utility of the appointment is so obvious, that one would hope there can be no occasion to convince him of the duty of persuading to an attendance on it, as far as may be in his power. As the appointment contemplates not

only gratitude for the fruits of the earth, but publick mercies generally; and, of course, these taken in connexion with whatever drawbacks there may be of publick calamity; a minister may find himself invited by his subject, to say something on the civil state of his country. Whenever this happens, let him remember, that he should carefully consider every step which takes him on such a ground. Civil duties, such as they are confessedly bound on men by the very nature of the social state, and such as they are enjoined in Scripture, do not come improperly, if not too often, from the pulpit. But when these subjects are dilated on after such a manner as to involve a discussion of party-politicks, there cannot be a more effectual way of making the pulpit an engine for the exciting and for the inflaming of those passions, which the discourses delivered in it ought to have a tendency to prevent and to allay. It is universally confessed, that divine worship and its attendant duties have a very happy effect, in the line which has been specified. But the Convention of this Church will have erred greatly, if the only day of the year which has been set apart by their appointment, should be found to have a counteracting effect, to that of all the Sundays, and all the other holidays of the calendar.

To the publick offices, there has been added—*“Forms of Prayers to be used in Families.”* Concerning these, there is nothing to be here said, except to express the sorrow, that it is a species of duty so little attended to in domestick arrangement; and the trust, that there may be expected a counteracting good example, at least in the families of the

clergy. In no line does there occur any considerable evil, without its involving of additional evils in its train. It is generally acknowledged as a consequence of publick prosperity, that too great a proportion of the time of the people is spent in dissipation. Even the circumstance of the interference of this with the regularity of hours—setting aside the indisposing effect on inclination—has a tendency to make family prayer an incumbrance. Here is an argument, which should influence a minister to promote, as much as in him lies, habits which have no alliance with dissipation; by the doing of which, he will be promoting domestick comforts, even considered independently on religion. It cannot, however, but be believed, that such comforts admit of great increase from those religious observances, which bring into view all the sanctions, whereby the rights and the duties of domestick relations are sustained.

Although the third department of this address is finished; there may be use in briefly adding a few articles of advice, in regard to a ministers's social and domestick intercourse with his flock.

In the first place, let him be impressed by the sentiment, that his visits to the individual families of his congregation had better be spared, than be such as shall encourage the opinion, that his mind is either frivolous, or more ardent in the pursuit of some object wide of the purposes of his vocation, than on these. It is not meant to suggest, that he is to abstain from all discourse concerning the matters of worldly interest, which, from time to time, come forward in succession to engage the attention

of the publick. The meaning is, that they should not be found to correspond with any favourite passions, or any too lively sensibilities of his own; that when the conversation can easily be directed to wards edifying subjects, the opportunity should be improved, and especially when the opportunity is given by those with whom he converses; the avoiding of it at such a time being an evident abandonment of pastoral duty. Perhaps it may be the opinion of some, that the pastoral visitation of a family should be with all the solemnity of authority, and with the professed design of inquiring into their states of mind; and even into domestick government in reference to religious concerns. It must be evident to those who know the state of the Church, that the far greater number of its families would not submit to such an investigation. If it be indeed a duty, resulting from their relation to the clergy, the latter ought to insist on its being carried into effect; and, in case of resistance, to shake off the dust of their feet, abandoning the specifick charges. But the giver of these remarks is far from being convinced, that it is a duty. In the character of a member of a congregation, he would not submit to it; because it is an exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the domestick, which is not enjoined either in Scripture or in the institutions of this Church. And as to any uses supposed to result from it, they are more than counterbalanced by an undue ministerial ascendancy, very liable to abuse. None doubt, that the Roman Catholick practice of auricular confession is occasionally applied to beneficial purposes; yet, Protestants consider the danger of its being horribly misapplied, an argument in ad-

dition to that of its being unrequired. Of the two practices, the latter seems the least alarming in this respect, that it is the most subject to systematick rule; while the other gives the greater room for the caprice of the individual minister. But, in contrariety to both of the practices, it is here thought, that, for the good to be done by the clerical order in this line of duty, their only arms are those of argument and persuasion, aided by the opinion which they can impress of their sincerity, and of their personal characters in all respects. Doubtless there is in this an additional motive, not only to correct conduct, but to such a state of mind, as will best enable them to conciliate to duties to which they have not a power to command.

In the Commentary on the Questions in the Services for the Ordaining of Deacons and Priests, there was pressed the point, that a clergyman should be careful to consider and to show himself the pastor of the whole flock, and not of a party among them, supposed to be especially attached to his interests. The same sentiment may now be properly applied against the contemplated fault, as it respects the danger of his being subjected to the charge of pride. Perhaps there is no fault, of which a clergyman is so liable to be accused. It has often happened within the speaker's knowledge, in instances in which, to the best of his judgment, there was no ground for the allegation. Probably it has been sometimes the result of a clergyman's supposing, that a reserved or a stately carriage is congenial with the dignity of his vocation. In this he is mistaken; because that dignity may be brought into an alliance with more substantial causes of personal respectabil-

ity, and such as are entirely consistent with conciliating manners. But when the prejudice is occasioned by a difference of demeanour towards the rich, and towards the poor; and especially by his avoiding of all society, except of the former; it is certainly a just cause of disesteem. It is doubted, however, whether this be justly called pride; and whether it be not rather a trait of the character of a sycophant. Even in what may reasonably be considered as offence offered, there should be care to guard against confounding indignity towards the person, with indignity offered to the profession: For it is proper to be aware of the infirmity of nature, which may tempt to the confounding of the two species of offence. If the question be concerning the degree of forbearance under evident personal offence; it must be perceived, that the precepts of Christian humility exact heavy sacrifices in this particular. And yet this sentiment is not to be extended so far, as to forbid sensibility to the injury; or even to condemn the manifesting of the sensibility in the deportment. But it is much the best, that this should be manifested principally in reserve; and in avoiding, as much as may be, future exposure to the evil: this however to be without the harbouring of hostility in the heart; but, on the contrary, to be made consistent with the being on such a footing with the party; as to be ready and likely to be looked to by him for pastoral services to himself, or to those under his direction and control. On any other principle than that here stated, every dispute of a minister with a parishioner—which, be it remembered, may take place with rectitude of intention in them both—is in danger of cutting off such



a parishioner and his family from all spiritual benefit, otherwise to be expected from their pastor.

There was also, in the preceding Commentary, some advice against engaging in the broils of political party. It may be of use to extend the sentiment to another species of party—that which is the result of the contentions between families, who are members of the same communion. A minister may be expected to engage on the one side or on the other, as a sacrifice for services rendered, or for attentions shown. Gratitude is both amiable in itself, and is a duty; but cannot exact a return by the commission of sin. Like other duties, it has its bounds; and within the limits which have been described, it has no call to come. To the entering into the quarrels of people, and to the being made an instrument of their passions, there is no obligation on any man; and least of all can there be the pretence of it on a clergyman; because of its unfitting of him in regard to a portion of his flock, not only for pastoral duty generally, but especially for that branch of it which may enable him to heal a breach when the passion causing it has begun to cool. If he judge it not likely to be of use to intrude as the composer of differences; let him not disqualify himself for being resorted to in so respectable a character, by being a party where, if he have any thing of the spirit of his profession, he would much rather be a mediator.

Questions may arise concerning the parochial arrangements of a congregation, and especially relative to their management of their property and pecuniary concerns. In matters of small moment, a minister had best take no part. In those of deeper interest,

he had best deliver his sentiments in proper time and place, but with moderation. By this he may happen to prevent much of that kind of imprudence, which is consistent with the best intentions. And the weight of his advice will always be the greater, from the circumstance of his being sparing of his interference. In such cases, let him take especial care, not to treat an opponent of his opinion, as an enemy of his person. Instances might be here mentioned, of as complete despotism in this department as ever was witnessed on a throne. Hence, some have rashly concluded; that it is best to deny to the minister of a parish all share in the economy of their pecuniary concerns. This is an error; because it would, in general, be an exclusion of the person who would be the more likely to advise well, from his being better informed than others, in management of this sort. If he should attempt to play the master, it is hard indeed, if there be no member of the congregation hardy enough to resist his usurpation. But if this have happened—which is indeed the case in some instances—it cannot be a ground on which to build a position, which would operate unfavourably in general.

Every clergyman—perhaps it may be said, every man in the line of his profession—is liable to unreasonable requests. In this particular, however, there are probably greater sacrifices exacted of a clergyman, than of any other man; if for no other reason, for that of “becoming all things to all men, so as by any means to gain some.” Still, this is a duty which has its limits; only, when refusal is bottomed on unreasonableness simply, let it be softened as much as possible, by graciousness of manner.

Some requests also will be preferred, tending to dispense with the duties laid on the minister by the Church, and ratified by his voluntary promise. It is certainly very indelicate in any lay-gentleman to attempt such a thing as this ; relying for success in it on his personal character, and perhaps consequence given to him by his wealth. Let graciousness of manner not be withheld, even here ; but let it be accompanied by such firmness, as is calculated to render the expectation desperate, and to prevent the like of it in future.

Let it not be thought a departing from subjects of the greatest magnitude, to something of less importance, when an exhortation is here given to a punctual compliance with appointments : for, in truth, there is no duty which can be discharged properly, without this circumstance attached to it. Were the present speaker to begin life anew, one of the most indispensable maxims of his conduct would be, to avoid, as much as possible, the being associated on any serious business, or the having of stated social intercourse of any sort, with persons habitually destitute of punctuality. On a retrospect of the past, he is obliged to impute to this cause, the misspending of a great proportion of his time. The means here recommended for the avoiding of the like, would often subject a man to the charge of rudeness ; but if he can accomplish it with firmness, and without passion, he will reap the benefit, without losing any friendships which it can be desirable to retain. It is surprising, that this subject is so often contemplated, without notice of its connexion with moral principles : for besides the violation of the law of truth involved in the delinquency, a man

has no more right to deprive his neighbour of the use of his time, than of any thing else which he calls his own. And of him who will be unjust in this particular, how shall it be known that he will be sparing in any other, should temptation offer? A gentleman, long since deceased, who filled an high station in the civil line, and was a man of good understanding, had a rather severe saying on the present subject. It was—"He who breaks an appointment would pick a pocket." The present adviser will not carry the matter quite so far, but he can truly affirm, that he has seldom been acquainted with an habitual offender in this way, of whom, if his other habits of life were known, there were not perceived some kindred deviations from the straight line of moral principle.

At any rate, it must be visible to all who have to transact with such persons any business that concerns the Church, or charity, or civil policy, that they render no services sufficient to counterbalance the disservice, resulting from the want of punctual regard to their engagements. In support of this sentiment, there shall be here advantage taken of a great name; the bearer of which was not more remarkable for any of his good qualities, than for his discernment of the characters of men, and for a sound judgment in matters of ordinary practice. When General Washington was at the head of the government of the United States, the present speaker was informed by a gentleman who was one of his official counsellors, that in the discussion of characters, with a view to the filling of publick offices, if it appeared of any person, that he was known to be deficient in punctuality; it was a maxim with the President, that

this unfitted for the office in question, whatever fitness in other points the party might be possessed of.

There having been directed against one great fault, the law of moral obligation, it shall be applied to another, which, like the preceding, is not seen often enough in such an association. What is here meant, is indiscretion. That the best of men may fall into this from mere frailty; and further, that some, from constitutional impetuosity, or absence of mind, may be indiscreet without moral turpitude, is here allowed. The whole intended to be maintained is, that much of what passes under the names of indiscretion and imprudence, is sometimes passion, and at other times vanity; so that, when originating in these, it would be prevented by a proper regimen of the party's mind. That frequent acts of indiscretion, whatever be its cause, lower a clergyman in the eye of the world, will not be doubted. The world would be unreasonably severe, in not making allowance for the infirmities of natural character. But in every question of this sort, between society and the individual, let a distinction be made between infirmity and a faulty habit of mind. In very early life, the speaker knew a clergyman, with whom it was said to be a favourite maxim—"In the name of God, what has a Gospel minister to do with prudence?" The same clergyman was remarkable for his imprudences, and as much so for violence of temper. Had this submitted to the precepts of Gospel meekness, it is probable, that there would have been an end of the indiscretions, which at last alienated from him all his friends.

"In looking back on the whole of this exercise, occasion is taken to add, that one benefit hoped to result from it, is the setting strongly before the mind of a newly ordained minister—although he may be expected to have satisfied himself of the truth of the proposition, independently on what has been now laid before him—that his duties are not limited to the pulpit and the desk ; but that, in addition to these, he has daily duties, amounting to what would be reckoned, in any other vocation, a full employment of the agent's time. Very different ideas must be entertained by any minister, who supposes that his flock may dispense with his services to such an extent, as does not interfere with the duties of Sunday. If they are not wanted at other times, it is because they are not worth the having at any time. It is contrary to all propriety, when ministerial duty is so far mistaken, as that in the language held relatively to the settling and the employing of a minister, he is said to give such a proportion of his time to one congregation, and such a proportion of it to another ; there seeming to be the presumption, that the only time actively devoted to the ministry, are the hours spent in preaching and public prayer. If these ideas were correct, there would be propriety in referring the clergy to some secular mean of helping to their subsistence ; because idleness, which is odious in any description of persons, must be peculiarly so in them. At present, their having of recourse to such means is merely held to be justifiable, on the score of hard necessity. But in the case supposed, it would be in itself fit and reasonable ; although certainly an acquital of a congregation, from the obligation of supporting the burden of their pas-

tor's entire maintenance. It may be presumed, however, that all such ideas are foreign to the genius of the profession ; and that the Church speaks wisely, when, in the exhortation in the Ordination Service, she warns the person to be ordained to "set aside, as much as he may, all wordly cares and studies." The principles of the present adviser relatively to the subject, are not severe : and he wishes never to see a minister's bodily labours of such extent, as to prevent his dedicating of a considerable proportion of his time to the cultivation of sacred literature, and of other literature also, in connexion with, and for the advancement of that his especial object. But let a parochial clergyman look at the employments of secular life ; and if his studies and his activity in his ministry, combined, do not occupy him at least as much as men are ordinarily occupied in the lines to which they are respectively appropriated ; let him be assured, that he cannot be living in a compliance with the promises which he made at his ordination : promises, pledging to an habitual employment, which would have been obligatory, if no such precise security had been exacted of him.

There is now submitted every article of preceding advice, to the test of what an ordained person must suppose will be his sense of it, when there shall remain nothing that concerns his ministry, except a retrospect of his ministerial conduct, together with a prospect of the effect which it is to have on his condition in a future state of being. And with the hope, that what has been said will be blessed to the salutary end of adding to his consolations at that important crisis, the whole shall be concluded with wishes in favour of the newly ordained minister [or minis-

ters]; and with prayers for his [or their] success in his [or their] holy calling, and for all the satisfactions which can be attached to it.

THE END.



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